

Horizon

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

PRISONER OF WAR

by CAPTAIN ROBIN CAMPBELL, D.S.O.

THE INTELLIGENTSIA

by ARTHUR KOESTLER

A QUESTION OF MINORITY

by HONOR TRACY

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EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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COMMENT

THE bombing of Monte Cassino is a terrible warning of what we may expect to happen in Rome and Northern Italy. Two facts must be recognized. The Germans will let military considerations override any feeling for art and culture, and so will we. The Italians are too unpopular with both sides for them to succeed in any appeals, even if they should make them. Since we are attacking and the Germans are defending, it is the Germans who must be prevented from turning ancient monuments into machine-gun nests, booby traps, gun emplacements, etc. The problem then is whether there is any pressure that can be applied to them or not. There are still two small fields of total war where the remnants of international law can operate: in the treatment of prisoners of war and in the bombardment of 'open cities'. Can this field be extended, by threats if necessary, to include the historic monuments of Italy and Southern France? Can both sides permit a neutral power to guarantee that these monuments are not used for military purposes, or destroyed in malice by evacuating armies? In the present state of international ethics, certainly not. Yet that is the only way in which they can be saved.

A preliminary might be to try to persuade people that they should be saved, for the destruction of Monte Cassino was received almost with gloating by the newspapers, especially those of the Left.

Alas, on the Pyramid of Power culture does not flourish very high, and, like oaks and beech trees, it vanishes far below the snow line. I wonder how many Press Lords, Air-Marshals, or Members of the War Cabinet in any country have ever heard of the Theatre of Palladio, the Amalienberg or the Schifanoia, or have read Milton's sonnet addressed to 'Captain or colonel or knight-at-arms', or how far one would have to descend the slopes of power to find someone who knew them.

Even more serious is the general public's indifference to the glories of our civilization. The Turks had very good reasons for blowing up the Parthenon, but they have not yet been forgiven. We should all try to realize (1) that we are the trustees of European Culture for Posterity; (2) that culturally all Europe is one, there is a common ownership of its civilization; and (3) that Europe is its civilization, and that if we strip it of its monuments and antiques, as we are stripping it of its political and economic

power, then we will have utterly destroyed its magic, its prestige in the world and therefore our own, and so it will go back into being that miserable appendage of Asia which it was till the Greeks defeated the Persians.

And one word to the Press Lords, high-ranking Destructive Desmonds, and Philistines of the Left. Try to think why you hate culture. Is it because you fear it? Or do you believe that when all the marks of civilization are erased, you will then seem civilized?

LOUIS MACNEICE
MUTATIONS

If there has been no spiritual change of kind
Within our species since Cro-Magnon Man
And none is looked for now while the millennia cool,
Yet each of us has known mutations in the mind
When the world jumped and what had been a plan
Dissolved and rivers gushed from what had seemed a pool.

For every static world that you or I impose
Upon the real one must crack at times and new
Patterns from new disorder open like a rose
And old assumptions yield to new sensation;
The Stranger in the wings is waiting for his cue,
The fuse is always laid to some annunciation.

Surprises keep us living: as when the first light
Surprised our infant eyes or as when, very small,
Clutching our parent's hands we toddled down a road
Where all was blank and windless both to touch and sight
Had we not suddenly raised our eyes which showed
The long grass blowing wild on top of the high wall.

For it is true, surprises break and make,
As when the baton falls and all together the hands
On the fiddle-bows are pistons, or when crouched above
His books the scholar suddenly understands
What he has thought for years—or when the inveterate rake
Finds for once that his lust is becoming love.

JOHN BETJEMAN

HENLEY-ON-THAMES

(*Air: 'Beddie, Old Man'*)

I see the winding water make
A short and then a shorter lake
As here stand I
And house-boat high
Survey the upper Thames
By sun the mud is amber-dyed
In ripples slow and flat and wide
That flap against the houseboat side
And flap away in gems.

In mud and elderscented shade
A reach away the breach is made
By dive and shout
That circles out
To Henley tower and town
And 'Boats for Hire!' the rafters ring
And pink on white the roses cling
And red the bright geraniums swing
In baskets dangling down.

Oh shall I see the Thames again
The prow promoted gems again
As beefy Ats
Without their hats
Come shooting through the bridge
And 'Cheerioh' and 'Cheeribye'
Along the waste of waters die
And low the mists of evening lie
And lightly skims the midge.

CAPTAIN ROBIN CAMPBELL, D.S.O.

PRISONER OF WAR

ONE of the odd things about being taken prisoner of war is that nobody to whom it happens ever seems to have imagined the possibility. When I was wounded in a raid behind the enemy lines in Cyrenaica in November 1941, it suddenly became obvious to me that I should have to be left behind when the others withdrew and that I must fall into the hands of the Germans. My first thought was, 'but this can't be happening to *me*.' After this first wild recoil I was able to examine my situation more calmly. I had quite expected to be killed and I was only wounded in the leg. I was flooded by a sense of relief. There was nothing more I could do and I began to feel almost serene (perhaps the morphia I had taken helped) and only slightly apprehensive about what the Germans would do to me.

After three months of illness and the amputation of my damaged leg, the relief at being alive was reinforced by the joy of convalescence and, even now, after two years, I still feel it sometimes.

I spent a year in various hospitals and then was sent to a prison camp for British officers in Thuringia, central Germany. Looking back, I discover that I soon adopted a double perspective for living in captivity; looking at my life from a vantage point in the future outside prison and dealing with every actual problem of avoiding discomfort in prison only as and when it arose. For a prisoner wounded in such a way that he knows he cannot escape this way of living from day to day and hour to hour, avoids fret and worry about the immediate future. He knows—or rather trusts—that one day he will emerge again into freedom, but there is nothing he can do to bring that day any nearer. He need have no anxieties except about such questions as the amount of straw in his mattress and how to make one tin of condensed milk last a week. Once inside the barbed wire perimeter of a prison camp, most of the anxieties and responsibilities of ordinary life are left on the outside. For one thing there is no money. The Germans issue special paper currency for prisoners of war, but since there is nothing to buy it represents nothing. Some

prisoners used it to bet with, but I could never find any satisfaction in winning a sheaf of paper. This simplifies life enormously. It is just like being so rich that you never have to consider the cost of anything with, I suspect, the added advantage that you need suffer no anxiety about competing claims for your spending. Once you have lost the habit of possessiveness or acquisitiveness, or had it broken by circumstances, it is surprising how little you need. Though with some people acquisitiveness must be something more than a habit, for there are prisoners of war who never lose it. They exercise their miserly propensities by hoarding such rarities as razor blades, lavatory paper and matches. Numerous cardboard boxes full of more or less useful possessions accrete round these people. Every now and again they do produce with the air of a conjuror the very thing that is needed. The improvident avoid the strain of packing and unpacking numerous cardboard boxes (the usual form of prisoners' luggage) when moving camp. And since your baggage is searched for contraband both on departure and arrival, you usually have to pack three times for one journey.

Another great simplification of existence is that food and clothes are free. No amount of effort will secure a man more than his share of either—at least no ordinary effort and success is not admired. Supplies of both food and clothes are supplemented by rare parcels from home, but the Red Cross rules that no prisoner may have more than a certain number. The food supplied in the Red Cross parcels is wholesome though monotonous and so not particularly appetizing; not that this matters, because the quantity is such that the appetite never needs stimulating. It is seldom that you finish a meal without the sensation that you could easily begin all over again. This, I have always been told, is the sign of a healthy diet and I certainly found it so. Sometimes after a breakfast at 9 o'clock of two slices of German black bread with margarine and jam and a large mug of English tea with sugar and condensed milk, I became so hungry by one o'clock that I found it difficult to concentrate on whatever I was doing, but usually there would be a hunk of bread to gnaw. Prisoners from the campaign in France told me that in the first months before the Red Cross food began to arrive, they were so weak from hunger that it cost them a real effort and several rests to climb two flights of stairs. I am unusually greedy and

before being captured I had been in the habit of giving a great deal of attention to food, but after about four months I could eat almost anything and I became much more interested in quantity than quality. I was only occasionally tortured by daydreams of oysters and lobster Newburg.

As to clothes, most of us, whatever our previous habits, came to regard them as only necessary coverings. There were a few persistent dandies who regularly appeared in uniforms with glittering buttons and lustrous shoes and who wore hats. They were regarded as harmless eccentrics. Not that the rest of us were very squalid, for there was an unexpressed feeling that it would be a very bad show not to shave punctually every day in spite of the fact that razor blades were extremely scarce (one blade had to do for six weeks or two months) and we had hot water only once a fortnight. Most prisoners just continued to wear a suit of battledress until it wore out and then applied to the English camp store for a new one, which they were given after a sort of means test.

By far the most unpleasant discomfort of a prison camp is the total lack of privacy. I shared a bed-sitting room about 20 feet square with fifteen other prisoners. We slept in double-decker beds which were ranged round the walls to leave space for two tables and some twelve kitchen chairs. I never grew accustomed to the gravelly hardness of these beds, which had loose wooden boards where springs should have been and on top a palliasse meagrely stuffed with straw. The longest period I was alone in this room was eighteen minutes. There was a small room used as a library where I used to go and read in the mornings; if you did not get there early enough there was no room to sit down. Even here the silence was broken by people coming to change their books at midday. To become adapted to this lack of solitude it was necessary to develop a kind of reptilian insensitiveness —like crocodiles in their tank at the Zoo, which walk over each other without either appearing to notice the other. When sixteen people live in the same room together for a year or more the evasions and other polite subterfuges of ordinary life naturally become impossible. Every word you speak to one of the fifteen is probably in the hearing of the other fourteen or some of them, so you cannot assume different personalities with different people. Nor can you hope to dissemble with success your opinion

on any subject. The only hope for comfortable relationships in these circumstances is candour softened by imaginative understanding. Although every person in the room more or less knows the opinion of every other person on any subject there is plenty of discussion which, however, rather easily becomes abusive argument. Prisoners are thrown together more by the random play of chance than by any stringently selective principle, and so their views are extremely diverse. I was surprised that so many of them were agreed that politics were a dirty racket and all politicians hypocrites on the make. Apart from occasional acrimony, good temper in argument is usual because it is unnecessary in that sort of existence.

Living permanently surrounded by so many people with whom they are on terms of schoolboy superficial intimacy, I imagine that all prisoners at times feel intensely lonely and sick for home. Even the most insensitive have their days of black depression. It is the result perhaps, of the sterility of an existence entirely deprived of the company of women and children (though I once heard an unashamed lecher declare that he missed dogs more than women). An exclusively male community seems to me to lack emotional drive and spontaneity. Many prisoners do become very firm friends, more usually because of shared experience than common tastes, but this kind of relationship seems more comforting than stimulating. It is accurately described by the phrase 'it is so nice to be with someone you don't have to talk to unless you feel like it.'

In a tightly confined society which is compacted by the common aim of presenting a united front to the Germans, the derelictions of the individual are all on the social plane. Prisoners have found that the best, indeed only way to treat the Germans is by an uncompromising insistence upon their rights under the Geneva Convention and by instant and persistent complaint to the Protecting Power (the Swiss who periodically visit the camp) if these rights are infringed. In my experience most Germans are constantly trying to put the relationship on another footing. The attitude and conduct of one type implies: 'You are the prisoners of the Herrenvolk and we shall treat you as we think proper without any of this nonsense about international agreements. We are knightly and magnanimous, not Bolsheviks, so we will not shoot you unless you do something to annoy us.'

Another type is constantly trying to insinuate a transaction into the relationship. He will say, in effect: 'Look here, you and I are sensible fellows and we neither of us want trouble and unpleasantness. I will let you do or have whatever it may be if you will just give me your word as an officer that you will not try to escape.' The concessions offered are commonly far short of the prisoners' rights laid down in the Geneva Convention. Every form of insidious tactic is used in the attempt to supplant the Convention as the basis of the relationship between prisoners and German camp authorities. The commandant of a hospital where I was for a time one day declared that one Red Cross parcel of food a fortnight per prisoner was quite enough and that he did not propose to adhere to the rule of one parcel a week per prisoner laid down by the International Red Cross. He refused to allow the food store to be opened. The senior English doctor pointed out that the German commandant could not decide such things. His reply was: 'On the contrary; I command this hospital and I intend to see that English prisoners are not better fed than German civilians.' After a good deal of argument he proposed compromise. The English doctor remained inflexible and filed a complaint. After about a month, during which the prisoners were on short rations, he must have received orders from the German War Office, at the instances of the Swiss, to adhere to the agreed rate, for he announced with a great show of magnanimity that he had decided to issue one parcel a week to every prisoner. This arrogance has its useful side; commandants cannot abide the thought of their subordinates stooping to swindle the English. Two German quartermasters caught stealing rations meant for British prisoners received the dreaded punishment of being sent to the Eastern front.

It is easy to see that compromise with the German authorities is fatal and inflexibility essential. The lowest thing a prisoner can do in the opinion of his fellows is to betray the united front of inflexibility for his own comfort and advantage. All forms of selfishness are instantly detected and loudly denounced. Prisoners develop a hawk eye for 'rackets', but appeasement is the deadliest crime. The British have one enormous advantage over prisoners of other nationalities. They expect to be well treated. In spite of wartime propaganda about devilish Huns

they are genuinely astonished and indignant if they are not cared for as honoured guests. This applies particularly to private soldiers. Their standards of food, sanitation and comfort are so high and their astonishment and disgust when expected to put up with lower standards so unfeigned and unrancorous that the Germans, unwilling to admit that their own standards are lower, are shamed into making improvements. It is quite impossible for the Germans to put across any *Herrenvolk* stuff in the face of the innocent arrogance of British soldiers, who are impenetrable to the idea of German superiority and simply think it uproariously funny. This baffles the Germans. In spite of persistent efforts to propagand British troops through the medium of a weekly newspaper called *The Camp*, I do not believe they have made any impression at all. *The Camp* has the usual three main lines of attack. First, the Germans are winning the war (the weekly summary of the war news is so flagrantly absurd that it defeats its end): the British should get together with the Germans, because, if the Allied Powers win, Russia will be supreme in Europe and the United States will appropriate the Empire (variations on this theme are plugged weekly in an article 'the German Point of View' which is very 'sane and moderate' in tone): the honest English working man is being exploited by capitalist Jews. These views are sandwiched between articles on such subjects as German motor-bicycle engines and German football; English football and racing results and chronicles of camp sports and concerts and other contributions written by the prisoners themselves. I suspect that hardly anybody who reads the paper reads 'the German Point of View'. If propaganda exerts its influence on the subconscious level of the mind, I suppose *The Camp* must have some influence though I have never seen the slightest sign that it has.

I believe almost every prisoner would agree that the attitude of the Germans towards the war and towards us has altered considerably since 1940. I am told by those who were captured in that year that after the fall of France the Germans were boasting that the war would be decided in their favour in a few months and that they treated English prisoners atrociously. When I was captured in November 1941 they were still full of confidence. Indeed they had grounds for confidence then. During the time I was in hospital in Athens we failed to destroy Rommel's forces

in North Africa; we lost Singapore and the Russians were retreating. I had an exasperating conversation with a Stuka pilot who had broken his arm. He was full of bounce and rather condescending. He thought it foolish of us to have made war on Germany, and it was a pity they were going to have to hurt us. My argument about violated agreements failed to convince him because he would have it that the occupation of Prague had preceded the Munich Agreement. I was exasperated, too, by the German women who visited the wards and brought cigarettes and picture papers to the German troops in the Athens hospital. They fussed about mournfully in their shabby, ill-fitting black clothes. After sympathizing over my amputated leg, one of these crows gloomily said to me one day: 'I am sure you did not want this war any more than we did, but what can people like you and I do? It's the governments that decide these things, isn't it?' No amount of talk could have shown her her mistake. It is sad to reflect that so many good, kind old and middle-aged women will have to suffer for their cow-like submission to German men. But I have no doubt that they would have thought Hitler perfectly splendid if he had won the war and that they would have been the first to applaud in foolish wonder. In Athens where these women were living, some 500 Greeks were at that time dying of starvation daily.

The ebbing of German confidence in the result of the war was quite obvious after Stalingrad (for which they had a day of national mourning) and Tunisia and was often reflected in their attitude towards prisoners. Guards became more accommodating and some even frankly conciliatory. I heard one guard say to a prisoner: 'You won't forget how good I've always been to you English?' If they had an unpopular task to perform such as making all prisoners get up in the middle of the night for a search, they would often excuse themselves by saying: 'We are sorry, but we are only doing our duty by carrying out orders.' Since obliteration-bombing began, the civilians whom prisoners meet travelling in trains from one prison camp to another are perhaps a shade less ready to start conversations. It was while travelling that I had the unforgettable experience of seeing a man literally foaming at the mouth with rage. He was a railway guard who had to hold up a train for a party of prisoners and their luggage. He shouted, he bellowed and flecks

of froth flew from his lips; he was pale and shaking. He must have been boiling up against his life for a long time. When he began to shout, the blank incomprehension and mild concern on the faces of the prisoners infuriated him still more. I do not believe I have ever seen a man so angry. To pretend not to understand is the most effective answer to a shouting German unless they are in a shooting mood.

Prisoners of other nationalities (except Americans) probably have a harder time than the British. For one thing they get far less food. The Russians, for example, are underfed and many are worked to death. They are generally treated as a commodity much less valuable than cattle. I saw many who were doing hard manual labour up till a fortnight before their death from tuberculosis of the lungs. Wherever it is possible, British prisoners give them extra food and some cigarettes. Most of those I saw seemed bewildered and childlike; at the first sign of friendliness they broke into happy smiles. In 1942, most of the French prisoners I saw seemed depressed, sloppy and surly and they displayed numerous photographs of Pétain in their sleeping quarters. But in the last year their spirits have risen and now they usually wave and shout friendly greetings to passing British prisoners. I met a French major, aged 53 and the father of twelve children, who had broken his arm trying to escape from his guards by jumping out of a train travelling at about 25 miles an hour.

German women do not always take advantage of the legal protection afforded by the Reich (which, by the way, is often referred to by British soldiers as 'the Third and Last') against the amorous advances of working prisoners. In spite of notices prominently displayed in working camps warning prisoners that they are liable to ten years' imprisonment for speaking to a German woman without special permission. I met a Frenchman who had faked an illness to get into hospital to escape the attentions of a mother and her daughter at the farm where he worked. He explained that he had had an instant success with the daughter, but her mother had discovered the affair and, anxious to supplant her daughter, was blackmailing him by threatening to denounce him to the police. An English soldier told me that he had seen a woman being led through the main street of her village with a placard round her neck announcing: 'I have been the whore of

a prisoner while my husband was fighting at the Eastern front.' I cannot vouch for the exact wording, but that was certainly the sense of it.

Conditions in an officer's prison camp form the perfect background for reading and writing. Being deprived of many outlets for action and freed from the mental and sensual distractions of normal life, the mind seems to need some load to grapple with if it is not to race like an engine with a slipping clutch. Particular books are hard to get and I found I could easily read and enjoy such formidably unreadable works as the life of Herbert Spencer in two volumes with a score of appendices. I found my mind worked more clearly and connectedly than ever before. For people whose only form of expression is action, the narrow confinement and monotony is a torment. We calculated that one unquiet spirit had walked at least 10,000 miles and worn out six pairs of boots since his capture simply by pacing round and round the compound—a gravel space some fifty yards square. Many prisoners learnt to play some musical instrument; one man constructed a model galleon out of toothbrush handles; quite a few played bridge or poker every evening of their lives; theatricals occupied quite a lot of the time of others; many learnt languages and worked for examinations.

On the whole I would say that captivity had a beneficial effect upon all but the most unteachable. Nobody has a job which occupies his whole energy; nobody can say: 'I've finished my work and now I will go to the cinema, pay 2s. 4d. and be entertained, or I will put on my slippers and read a detective story or turn on the radio.' Prison life is not divided into thought-tight compartments of work and play. If prisoners want entertainment they must work for it themselves. Most of them therefore find some activity which is neither completely one thing nor the other, but both at once. Their mental energy thus becomes spread over their whole waking life and it is virtually impossible in prison surroundings not to be led by this shift of perspective to some consideration of the bases on which your life and the lives of others rest. They learn to question these bases and to overhaul and sometimes to revise the values by which they have lived their lives. Those who do this seem to become more aware and more understanding. The trouble is that imprisonment goes on too long. I fancy that many people would benefit by a year

of enforced inactivity and freedom from small anxieties and distractions to examine the pre-suppositions and aims of their conduct and that of others. But unless these people are practised mystics, the lack of novelty in time breeds a dreadful staleness. There are some unfortunate men who were captured in the first weeks of the war and many who have been in prison camps since the summer of 1940, who are still there.

Returning to England is an overwhelming experience for one who has been a prisoner of war. It is a distinct shock to find that the world outside is no longer hostile but anxious to be kind and helpful. Solitude and freedom to go and come and see whom you will are intoxicating. It is a form of convalescence in which all impressions are more vivid and the exercise of every faculty and appetite more deeply enjoyable. Returned prisoners are not the best people to ask about the changes in life at home, for they are concerned to recognize and greet all that has remained unchanged and familiar. The great contrast for prisoners is between England and Germany, where every civilian looks gloomy and hag-ridden. Even before the war they looked a bit like this, but I believe they have now lost confidence in the future and, though all that I was able to see of Germany convinced me that they are far from collapse, their morale is noticeably lower than at the end of 1941 when I was captured.

I think that perhaps the best way in which it is possible to help prisoners of war is for their relatives to write to them regularly. It is most depressing to feel that your absence makes no difference. It is encouraging to be told occasionally that you are being missed. To receive a letter always lessens the feeling of being a forgotten, useless exile; it strengthens the ties with the life you would like to be sharing. I found that it was not so much the big events that I was glad to hear about as details about personalities. Many prisoners are, however, passionately curious about post-war planning, and a copy of the Beveridge Report was a best-seller in the Camp. The best sort of books to send to a prisoner are books on his special subject, books of permanent serious interest and a sprinkling of contemporary novels.

Captain Campbell was taken prisoner on the Commando raid which tried to capture Rommel's Headquarters. The Commanding Officer, Colonel Keyes, V.C., was killed; Captain Campbell was severely wounded and taken prisoner.

A. KOESTLER

THE INTELLIGENTSIA

I

‘INTELLIGENTSIA’ is one of those terms difficult to define, but easy to associate. It is logically blurred but emotionally vivid, surrounded with a halo, or rather several halos which overlap and vary according to period and place. One may list as examples the romantic salon; the professional middle classes; terroristic organizations of students and aristocracy in the second half of nineteenth-century Russia; patriotic University Corps in post-Napoleonic Germany; the Bohemians of Montmartre, and so on. There are also evocative geographical names like Bloomsbury, Montparnasse, and Cagnes; and certain typical attitudes to life including clothing, hair-fashion, drink and food. The aura of the intelligentsia changes all the time; its temporary representatives are subdivided into classes and groups, and even its limits are blurred by a host of camp followers and hangers-on: members of the aristocracy, mæcenases, tarts, fools, admirers and Earnest Young Men. Hence we won’t get far with impressionistic judgements, and had better look up the Oxford dictionary for a solid definition.

There we find:

‘Intelligenzia, -sia, The part of a nation (esp. the Russian) that aspires to independent thinking.’

Thus the Concise Oxford Dictionary, 3rd edition, 1934.

By 1936, in the climate of the pink decade and the popular front, the definition has undergone a significant change:

‘The class consisting of the educated portion of the population regarded as capable of forming public opinion.’

(The Shorter Oxford Dictionary, 2nd edition, 1936).

This second version has since obviously been proved too optimistic, and we had better fall back on the first which is excellent. Historically, it is indeed the ‘aspiration to independent thinking’ which provides the only valid group-characteristic of the intelligentsia.

But how does it happen that an ‘aspiration towards independent thinking’ arises in a part of a nation? In our class-ridden world this is obviously not a matter of a spontaneous association

of the gifted—enlightened dukes, plus miners' sons plus General Practitioners. The intelligentsia of a given period and place is of a fairly homogeneous social texture: loose threads only appear on the fringes. Intelligence alone is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to become a member of the Intelligentsia. Instead, we have to regard the formation of this particular group as a social process which, as far as modern society is concerned, begins with the French Revolution.

II

THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE THIRD ESTATE

Among the upper strata of the Third Estate the aspiration to independent thinking was not a luxury but a dire necessity of survival. The young bourgeoisie, hemmed in by the stultifying feudal structure had to conquer its historic *lebensraum*, and this conquest was only possible by blowing up the feudal totems and taboos with the dynamite of 'independent thought'. The first modern intellectuals were the Encyclopædists, and they enter the historical stage as the great debunkers and iconoclasts. Goethe resurrected is unimaginable in our time, but Voltaire would be within a fortnight acclimatized in Bloomsbury, winning all weekend competitions of the *New Statesman*. For Goethe was the last Renaissance genius, a direct descendant of Leonardo, and his attitude to Society that of a courtier of some enlightened Florentine prince; whereas with Voltaire, the great debunking of feudal values begins.

The intelligentsia in the modern sense thus first appears as that part of a nation which by its social situation not so much 'aspires' but is *driven to* independent thought, that is to a type of group behaviour which debunks the existing hierarchy of values (from which it is excluded) and at the same time tries to replace it with new values of its own. This constructive tendency of the intelligentsia is its second basic feature. The true iconoclasts always had a prophetic streak, and all debunkers have a bashfully hidden pedagogic vein.

But where had these new values of their own come from? This is the point where Marxist analysis ends in over-simplified schemata:

'The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part . . . Constant revolutionizing of production,

uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind . . .

And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature.'

(*Manifesto of the Communist Party. 1848*).

The first paragraph quoted shows Marx and Engels at their best; in the second they take the fatal short cut from Economy to 'Superstructure': that is culture, art, mass psychology. Marxian society has a basement—production, and an attic—intellectual production; the staircase and the lifts are missing.

For it is not as simple as that: the triumphant class creating its own philosophic superstructure to fit its mode of production like a tailored suit. The *Encyclopædia* was not commissioned by the National Assembly. Whenever a class or group emerged victorious from its struggles, it found the befitting ideology already waiting for it like a ready made suit in a department store. Thus Marx found Hegel, Feuerbach, and Ricardo, Mussolini had only to pick Sorel and Pareto, Hitler discovered Gobineau, Houston Stuart Chamberlain and Jung; Stalin revived Machiavelli and Peter the Great. This of course, is a mixed bag of examples of progressive and regressive movements which, strictly speaking, should be kept apart. For regressive movements need simply to fall back on superannuated values—not on the last, but on the last-but-one or last-but-two, to perform a romantic revival, and derive a lot of pseudo-revolutionary gusto out of this 'revolution à rebours'. And there is always a part of the intelligentsia which, abandoning its aspiration to independent thought and detaching itself from the main body, lends itself to such romantic revivals. They are the tired and the cynics, the hedonists, the romantic capitulators, who transform their dynamite into Bengal lights, the Juengers, Montherlants, Ezra Pounds.

Discarding these, there still remains the problem of how and why the true, emergent, progressive movements in history, those which led to the Rights of Man and to the founding of the First Workers International, those who have no last-but-one precepts to fall back on, invariably find the right ideology waiting for them at the right moment. I repeat that I do not believe any more that the economic process by itself creates its own superstructure. Orthodox Marxism has never produced the historical evidence for this postulate. Nor, of course, is it a matter of coincidence. It seems rather that political economy and cultural development are merely two aspects of the same basic process, which we are as yet far from being able to define.

Two examples from other spheres may help to bring this vague sounding assertion into relief. The first is the old mind-body problem where the antithesis between materialistic and idealistic schools was much the same as between historical materialism and historical idealism, until the double-aspect theory brought the quarrel about which is the cause and which the effect, which is the hen and which the egg, to an at least temporary close. Thus your gastric acid is neither the cause nor the effect of your nervous state, but both are aspects, consequences of your total mode of living. The second example is the relation between physics and mathematics. When Einstein was faced with the contradictory evidence of two perfectly sound physical experiments (Michelson-Morley and Fizeau) he was able to develop the theory of Relativity only because the apparently abstract and useless non-Euclidian mathematical fantasies of Bolyai, Riemann and others were waiting for him just at the right moment, ready-made around the corner. The mathematical and the physical elements of Relativity were developed quite independently, and their coincidence would appear miraculous, without the recognition of a fundamental trend of evolution in scientific thought, of which the various faculties are merely isolated aspects.

The rise of the Third Estate and of the progressive middle classes was thus neither the cause nor the effect of humanistic liberal philosophy. The two phenomena sprang from the same root, they were entwined and correlated like colour and shape in the same object. *The basic function of the Encyclopædists and of all later intelligentsias was this correlating of social and intellectual*

evolution; they were the self-interpreting, introspective organs of the social body; and this function automatically includes both the iconoclastic and the pedagogic, the destructive and the constructive element.

III

THE DECAY OF THE THIRD ESTATE

This function gives a clue to the always peculiar structure of the intelligentsia.

Social behaviour has a much greater inertia than thought. There is always an enormous discrepancy between our collective ways of living and the accumulated data of science, art, technique. We wage wars, go to church, worship kings, eat murderous diets, conform to sexual taboos, make neurotics of our children, miseries of our marriages, oppress and let ourselves be oppressed —whereas in our textbooks and art galleries there is embodied the objective knowledge of a way of living which we shall only put into practice in decades or centuries. In everyday life we all behave like creatures in a period piece, anachronistic caricatures of ourselves. The distance between the library and the bedroom is astronomical. However, the body of theoretical knowledge and independent thought is there, only waiting to be picked up, as the Jacobins picked up the Encyclopædist.

This picking up, however, is the function of a special type of people; the liaison agents between the way we live and the way we *could* live according to the contemporary level of objective knowledge. Those who are snugly tucked into the social hierarchy have obviously no strong impulse towards independent thought. Where should it come from? They have no reason to destroy their accepted values nor any desires to build new ones. The thirst for knowledge is mainly confined to situations where the unknown is disquieting; the happy are rarely curious. On the other hand the great majority of the oppressed, the underdogs, lack the opportunity or the objectivity or both, for the pursuit of independent thought. They accept or reject the existing values; both attitudes are inarticulate and unobjective. Thus the function of co-ordination between the two concepts *Homo* and *Sapiens* falls to those sandwiched in between two layers, and exposed to the pressure of both. The intelligentsia is a kind of sensitive, porous membrane stretched between media of different properties.

One should not however confound them with the middle classes as such. Sensitivity, searching and groping are attitudes which presuppose a certain amount of frustration—not too much and not too little; a kind of moderate unhappiness, a harmonious disequilibrium. The upper strata which accept the traditional values, lack this frustration; the bottom strata have too much of it—to the degree of being either paralysed or discharging it in convulsive fits. Further, it must be a *specific* frustration—the discontent of the professional man, writer, artist, who rebel not because society has deprived them of every chance, crushed and buried them in pit or workshop, but because they have been given a margin large enough to develop their gifts, but too narrow to make them feel smug and accept the given order of things. For the smug, thinking is a luxury, for the frustrated a necessity. And as long as the chasm between thought and tradition, theoretical insight and practical routine prevails, thinking must necessarily be directed by the two poles of debunking and Utopianism.

All this does not apply any more to the bulk of the middle class. It did as long as their climate was 'Commonwealth' and Jacobinism. Meanwhile the once revolutionary urban bourgeoisie has become a conservative force. No more a sensitive membrane, but an inert sticky glue which holds the social body together. Their frustrations are repressed, their aspirations are not towards new hierarchies of values, but towards climbing to the top of the existing hierarchy. Thus the intelligentsia, once the vanguard of the ascending bourgeoisie, becomes the Lumpen-Bourgeoisie in the age of its decay.

IV

THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE FOURTH ESTATE

As the Third Estate gradually loses its progressive character to become first stagnant then regressive, the intelligentsia becomes more and more detached from it and driven to the quest for more vigorous allies, capable of fulfilling its task of demolition and construction.

The most fascinating example for this quest is nineteenth-century Russia. '... Whether they (the revolutionary intelligentsia) spoke of the necessity of political liberty, of the plight of the peasant or of the socialist future of society, it was always their own plight which really moved them. And their plight was not

primarily due to material need: it was spiritual.' (Borkenau, 'The Communist International').

This spiritual plight of the Russian intelligentsia was yet another form of the duality I mentioned: the contradiction between the inert, stagnant, habit-conditioned form of everyday life on the one hand, and the accumulated data of objective knowledge lying fallow as 'theory' and 'ideology' on the other. For the nineteenth-century Russians this latter principle was embodied in Western European civilization: in British Parliamentarism, French literature, German philosophy. For them, the Westerner was the incarnation of *homo sapiens* as opposed to the Barbarians of the steppes; just as, by an ironical turn of history, the Western intelligentsia of the two post-war decades became spellbound by Russian Communism which seemed to incorporate the truly human Utopia, as opposed to the decay of Capitalism.

There is, however, a fundamental difference between the early Russian revolutionary intelligentsia—the Shelyabows, Sonja Petrovskajas, Bakunins, Nechaews, Kropotkins, and the Bloomsbury of the Pink Decade. It is easy to sneer at the comparison and to contrast the futility of the latter with the heroism of the assassins of Alexander II, the martyrdom of the Siberian exiles and the prisoners of Schluesselburg. Racial comparisons between the undeniably greater endurance and fatalism of the semi-asiatic Russians and the highly strung Westerners provide one differential factor, but not the basic one. The basic point is that people grow under the burden of their responsibilities and shrink if the burden is taken from them. Nechaew lived for a number of years chained to the wall of a humid cell and when his comrades succeeded in establishing contact and offered to liberate him, refused because he preferred them to concentrate on more important tasks. But later, in the emigré atmosphere of Geneva, he became involved in the most squalid quarrels and died an obscure nobody. The venerable and justly venerated Russian student heroines and martyrs were not less hysterical than any character of Huxley's or Evelyn Waugh's; Lassalle was a snob who got himself killed in a quixotic duel, Marx a pathologically quarrelsome old sponger, Bakunin had an incestuous fixation to a sister, was impotent and died a virgin; Trotsky at a certain period spent all his afternoons and evenings playing chess in the Café Central in Vienna—a typical figure from an

Osbert Lancaster Café Royal Landscape; Lenin suffered a traumatic shock when his brother Alexander was hanged—hence his fanatical hatred of the Bourgeoisie of which, in analytical terms, the Russian revolution was merely a 'projection'. Neurosis is inherent in the structure of intelligentsias (I shall come back to this point in a moment): history, however, is not interested in a person's motives, only in his achievements. But why is it that the burden and bliss of responsibility is given to the intelligentsia in certain periods and in others not, condemning the latter to barrenness and futility? This is the question to which the comparison between the early Russians and Bloomsbury boils down; more precisely to the question of the historical constellation which accounts for the sharing-out of responsibilities.

The answer becomes at once obvious by a comparison of the two countries' sociological structure. Nineteenth-century Russia had no Trade Unions, no Labour movement or Co-operatives. Serfdom was only abolished in 1862; in that drowsy, inert giant-country there was no gradual transition from patriarchal feudalism to modern Capitalism; I have spoken to peasants who took aeroplanes for granted, watching them each day fly over their heads but had never seen a railway or motor-car; others who had travelled in a car but wouldn't believe that such a thing as a bicycle existed.

What a paradise for intellectuals with pedagogical yearnings! When the first of them, the martyrs of Narodnaya Volya, started what they called 'going among the people' dressed as peasants, preaching the new gospel, they trod on virgin soil, they found no competition in the shape of Trade Unions and Labour politicians, telling them to cast off their masquerade and go back to the Bloomsbury of Petrograd or Moscow. The mushik proved apathetic and did not respond to their appeal; but the crusading intelligentsia was not discouraged because they had no rivals; they changed their tactics from mass-appeal to terrorism, from terrorism to work among the industrial proletariat, the landless peasants, among the soldiers. They quarrelled, they split, they ramified; but all the time they could work in the untouched raw material of History, could project their spiritual plight, their desire to destroy and rebuild on to a gigantic historical plane. Their faith moved rocks because there still were unhewn rocks to move.

In contrast to them, the Western intelligentsia found no

virgin fields to plough, no natural allies to realize their aspirations to independent thought. According to Marxist theory the intelligentsia was to join the ranks of the working class and to become their strategists and tacticians. There is no evidence that the intelligentsia lacked the courage or the ability to do so. In 1848 students and workers fought together on the barricades; in the French Commune and in the revolutionary movements after the last war in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and even in the International Brigades of Spain, they gave an excellent account of themselves. But from the middle of the nineteenth century onward, the workers of Central and Western Europe had rapidly developed their own organizations, parties, trade unions, produced their own leaders and, above all, their own bureaucracy—men with iron wills and wooden heads. In an age of accelerated developments, the organized Fourth Estate had become stagnant much quicker than the Third in its time, and without even ascending to power. The crumbs of material improvements and the shadow of political influence which various Sections of the Second International had wrung from the rulers, were enough to paralyse their impetus. Members of the Western Intelligentsia could become Labour members of Parliaments, editors of Left papers, lecturers in dreary evening classes; but there were no rocks to move with the lever of 'independent thought'. Towards the end of the century the Western intelligentsia had only the choice to be either bourgeois decadents or proletarian schoolmasters. Their groups and cliques developed according to these alternative poles, with a spectrum ranging from the French Symbolists through the 'George-Kreis' to the Fabians. Compare Shaw with Voltaire, Leon Blum with St. Just, and you get the difference—not so much in stature as in historical opportunity.

The shake-up of the first world war seemed to create a new opportunity for a general debunking and re-building. The whole body of ideas had undergone a radical transformation: Relativity and Quantum mechanics, Hormonology and Psycho-analysis, Leninism and Behaviourism, Aviation and Wireless, Expressionism and Surrealism—a completely new universe had taken shape in the library; and the dazzling light it radiated drove the intelligentsia half crazy by its contrast to the anachronistic, dusty-musty traditions still governing everyday conduct and beliefs.

What a historical opportunity for de-bunking and re-building; but where were the allies to carry it out? The sensitive membrane vibrated wildly; but there was no resonance-body attached to it. Utopian striving during those two decades was monopolized by the Third International, whose blue-print for the European revolution was shaped on the conditions of a country with 80 per cent illiterates and a ratio of rural to urban population of ten to one. During the two decades of its existence the revolutionary movement was focussed on and governed by that semi-asiatic dictatorship. Its European extension needed not intellectuals, but a ruthless and uncritically obedient bureaucracy. The few members of the Western intelligentsia who were accepted into its ranks lost first the right, and soon even the desire for 'independent thought'; they became fanatic sectarians and Party-hacks, while the best among them met a tragic end. Particularly tragic was the fate of the revolutionary intelligentsia in the country where revolution seemed almost within reach, Germany. Liebknecht and Luxembourg were murdered in '18, Paul Levy committed suicide after his expulsion from the C.P., Ruth Fischer, also expelled, vanished into obscurity, Toller hanged himself in New York, Muehsam committed suicide in a Nazi concentration camp, Max Hoelz was drowned under dubious circumstances in Russia, Heinz Neumann, the last surviving C.P. leader who came from the intelligentsia was liquidated.

But the bulk of the Western intelligentsia were never admitted to this bloody Olympus. They were not wanted, had to remain fellow-travellers, the fifth wheel to the cart. The intelligentsia of the Pink Decade was irresponsible, because it was deprived of the privilege of responsibility. Left in the cold, suspended in a vacuum, they became decadents of the revolution just as their predecessors had become decadents of the bourgeoisie. It was nobody's fault; for they were the mirror, not the light.

I am neither trying to whitewash, nor to accuse. The intelligentsia is part of the social body, its most sensitive part; when the body is ill, the skin develops a rash. The deterioration of the intelligentsia is as much a symptom of disease as the corruption of the ruling class or the sleeping sickness of the proletariat. They are symptoms of the same fundamental process. To sneer at the intelligentsia and, while depriving it of the responsibility of action, shove on to it the responsibility of failure, is either

thoughtless stupidity or a manœuvre with obvious motives. Nazism knew exactly what it was doing when it exterminated the intelligentsia of the European Continent.

V

THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND NEUROSIS

This sensitive membrane not only stretches between heterogeneous social classes, but between the social body as a whole and its environment. It is tempting, and perhaps not entirely futile, to follow up this metaphor for a while. It is the surface, the ectoderm, philogenetically the rind of the plasmatic bubble, which provides the tissues for the nerves, the spinal cord and the brain in the embryo. The central nervous system is derived not, as one would expect, from the inside, the sheltered parts, the core; but from the exposed surface, permanently submitted to the bombardment of external stimuli, to irritation and excitement, some lust and much pain. Under the influence of this permanent buzzing shower-bath of stimuli the surface-tissue gradually loses its obtuseness and undergoes that strange transformation, that 'burning-through' process which finally gives rise to the elusive, first faint glow of consciousness. The grey matter of the brain-rind was originally skin-tissue, exposed and brow-beaten, transformed by a unique organic metamorphosis. Even Freud, that giant of profanity, became almost lyrical where (*in Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) he dealt with this aspect of the biology of the mind.

However, man developed a skull, in which his precious grey matter is safely packed like caviar in a box. No such casing is provided by society for its nervous tissues. They are rather treated like corns on the toes, a nuisance permanently trampled on and permanently hitting back with mean little stabs.

To return from metaphor to fact: the relation between intelligentsia and neurosis is not accidental, but functional. To think and behave independently puts one automatically into opposition against the majority whose thinking and behaviour is dependent on traditional patterns: and to belong to a minority is in itself a neurosis-forming situation. From the nonconformist to the crank there is only one step; and the hostile pressure of society provides the push.

When a man in a concert hall coughs, everybody will cough,

and one feels the physical itching in one's throat. Group-mimicry is a real force; to resist it means getting out of tune with one's social environment, creates neurotic tensions and feelings of guilt. One might in theory be a thousand times in the right, and yet feel guilty for butting against the accepted wrong, sanctioned by a tradition whose roots have sprouted in one's own unconscious self. To quarrel with society means to quarrel with its projections in one's self, and produces the classical neurotic split patterns. Oedipus situation and inferiority complex, timidity and arrogance, over-compensation and introversion are merely descriptive metaphors for deformations which spring from basically the same root. An intelligentsia deprived of the prop of an alliance with an ascending class must turn against itself and develop that hot-house atmosphere, that climate of intellectual masturbation and incest, which characterized it during the last decade.

And it must further develop that morbid attraction for the pseudo-intellectual hangers-on whose primary motive is not the 'aspiration to independent thought' but neurosis pure and simple, and who crowd around the hot-house because the world outside is too cold for them. They infiltrate, and gradually outnumber the legitimate inhabitants, adding to their disrepute, until, in periods of decadence, the camp-followers gradually swallow up the army. It is a sad transformation when social protest dissolves into a-social morbidity.

But even for the 'real' intelligentsia, neurosis is an almost inevitable correlate. Take sex for example. On the one hand we know all about the anachronistic nature of our sex-regulating institutions, their thwarting influence and the constant barrage of unhappiness they shower on society. On the other hand, individual experiments of 'free companionship', marriages with mutual freedom, etc. etc., all end in pitiful failure; the very term of 'free love' has already an embarrassingly Edwardian taint. Reasonable arrangements in an unreasonable society cannot succeed. The pressure of the environment (both from outside and from inside our conditioned selves) is enormous; under its distorting influence the natural becomes cramped, even in writing. You feel it even in such accomplished craftsmen as D. H. Lawrence and Hemingway. You hear, when the critical situation approaches, the author saying to himself: 'Damn it,

it is an act of nature and I am going to put it as easily and naturally as if the two of them were having a meal.' And then you watch him, the author, putting his sleeves up and setting himself to the task ; sweat pours down his brow, his eyes pop out of his head, the nib of his pen breaks under the pressure of his desperate efforts to be 'easy and natural about it'. The trouble is, of course, that while he writes, his environment (i.e. the potential readers) have closed in around him; he feels their stare and breathless expectancy, and feels paralysed by it. Hence the cramped dialect of Lady Chatterley's lover and that preposterous rabbit in the bag for which no bell would ever toll, in an otherwise masterly novel.

The pressure of the environment cramps art as it cramps behaviour. One may challenge this environment, but one has to pay for it, and the price is neurotic guilt. There never was an intelligentsia without a guilt-complex; it is the income tax one has to pay for wanting to make others richer. An armament manufacturer may have a perfectly clean conscience; but I have never met a pacifist without a guilty look in his eyes.

Those who attack the intelligentsia for its neurotic dispositions might as well attack the miners for their susceptibility to T.B. It is a professional disease and should be recognized as such, without scorn nor shame.

VI

THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE FUTURE

The old, liberal and socialist intelligentsia of the Continent is no more; though we still fail to realize how thoroughly Nazism implemented its poet laureate's programme 'When I hear the word culture I fire my pistol.' A new intelligentsia may be growing underground, a new seed beneath the snow; but in spite of newspaper articles, intelligence-digests, radio, etc., we know at present as little about the mental climate of the people beyond the Channel, about how the past, present and future looks, smells, tastes to them, as we know about the planet Mars. Samples of literature which reach us from France do not seem to me very encouraging; but then, I am perhaps prejudiced against what I believe to be the growing French intellectual predilection for mclodious bombast. Yet in Italy and the Balkans, in Austria and Norway, a process might already have started which one day

will come into the open as a brand-new movement, a fresh attitude to life which will make all of us appear like old Victorian dodderers; and any of us who earn a patronizing pat will have got all the credit which historically they deserve.

This is all speculation; it is easier to prophesy in terms of decades than in terms of years. One may have some ideas as to the historical curve along which we move; but the oscillations and ripples of the curve are completely unpredictable. If, in the long run, Burnham's diagnosis comes to be true (as I believe it well may), and if, after some intermediary oscillations, we are in for an era of managerial super-states, the intelligentsia is bound to become a special sector in the Civil Service. This is less far-fetched and fantastic than it sounds; in Russia during the past twenty years this state of affairs has been realized to a very large extent, and Germany during the last ten years was on the way to imitate it. Russian publishing houses, theatres, building trusts, research laboratories, universities and medical services are all owned by the State; the author, actor, architect, scientist, etc., is in fact a civil servant, though the atmosphere is not exactly that of Whitehall. But even the literary movements in Russia—Revolutionary Romanticism', 'Socialist Realism', 'Operative Literature', 'New Patriotism' have not spontaneously, organically grown, but were decreed at Party-Congresses and by utterances of government spokesmen; and the same applies, in varying degree, to poetry, drama, architecture, films, not to mention historical research and philosophy. The successive philosophical and artistic movements in the Soviet State look as if they were performed to the pattern 'Left turn—Right turn—As you were.' In the German Reichskultkammern the transformation of Parnassus into a barrack-square was equally thorough.

In the Anglo-Saxon countries a similar development is difficult, but not altogether impossible to visualize. Above all, a number of different roads may lead to the same goal. Total mobilization during the present war was a kind of dress-rehearsal for the Western version of the bureaucratized state, and during the last two years the intelligentsia has to a large extent been absorbed as temporary civil servants in the M. of I., as P.R.O.s, in the B.B.C., etc. For the time being 'job' and 'private production' are still kept in separate compartments (with the result of the

latter becoming more and more atrophied); but it is imaginable that a situation may arise in which the two merge; when, instead of regarding the former as a kind of patriotic hacking and the latter as the real thing, the energies become suddenly canalized into one stream. A few may start the new mode, and the rest follow suit; the individuals concerned may believe that they are following a personal impulse, whereas in reality it would be a process of adaptation to the changed social situation of the managerial state. The danger of this happening is all the greater as conformism is often a form of betrayal which can be carried out with a perfectly clear conscience; and the temptation to exchange the miseries which intellectual honesty entails for the heart-warming satisfactions of managerial efficiency is great. The collapse of the revolutionary movement has put the intelligentsia into a defensive position; the alternative for the next few years is no more 'capitalism or revolution' but to save *some* of the values of democracy and humanism or to lose them all; and to prevent this happening one has to cling more than ever to the ragged banner of 'independent thinking'.

It is not, at present, a very popular banner; and unique in this respect, that on its cloth the spittle of derision has clotted together with the blood of our dead.

HONOR TRACY

A QUESTION OF MINORITY

WILLI was busy writing his evening dispatch when Kipfel came up to the desk and began his chatter about the asylum.

'Now, Kipfel, I have work to do,' said Willi, in his kindly way. 'We will discuss your project in the morning. I have not even been able to digest this morning's *Times* yet.'

'Work! work! that is all you think,' said Kipfel, bitterly. 'Do you never stop to consider the wants of your fellow men? These poor lunatics need you. If I were asking you to prepare anything new, it would be another matter, but you have only

to repeat the lecture you gave to the Friends of Europe. It is not much to ask from an old comrade.'

Willi stroked his distinguished black beard in perplexity. 'But, in Heaven's name, man, what can these lunatics want with a lecture on the position of minorities in post-war Europe?'

Kipfel wagged a finger at him. 'Do not despise them,' he said, 'among them are enlightened and progressive individuals. They practically run their own place, do all their own gardening and laundry. A farm is attached. In a distracted world, they form a little island of contentment and peace. They have a drama club, a music club and a debating society. It is the last mentioned that you will address.'

Willi cried, in alarm, that he had not agreed to do anything of the sort.

'You will, I know you will,' Kipfel answered, confidently. 'What grander thing can a human being do than help his neighbour in misfortune? Besides, if you think of it,' he added, as a brilliant notion came to him, 'they are a minority themselves'.

We should explain about these two. Willi was the London correspondent of a big neutral newspaper. Until 1933, Kipfel had done similar work for a paper in Berlin. The high moral tone of his conversation had developed since that date; previously he had been a realist and hadn't cared who knew it. Now he did little jobs for Willi and little jobs for Fritsch, another neutral correspondent, and sometimes he was too aggressive and sometimes too humble; but always he harped upon the obligation of people to do things for others.

There was rather more in his present enterprise than mere zeal and goodwill, as it happened. His brother-in-law, Mr. Laufer, once a *geheimrat* in Dresden, was about to apply for a clerical post in the very institution that they were discussing. If it were known that Mr. Laufer were related to the Dr. Kipfel who introduced the lecturer to the debating society, his case might be strengthened, and the lunatics would profit at the same time; or so the little chap argued. Therefore he drew his chair purposefully up alongside Willi's and began to expound, waving his fat hands and spraying the other liberally in the force of his speech.

The outcome was that Willi packed some documents into a portfolio and took the train to Hindhead, from which the house

was a mere fifty minutes' walk. At lunch, which he took with the Superintendent, he inquired delicately if there were any little whims or fancies among the members of the society which he ought to know about in good time, and humour; but the other man raised his eyebrows in such evident surprise that he was terribly confused and hastily made out that it was a routine question he put in order to get the feel of an audience. He felt that he had made a bad beginning, and this impression deepened when he got to the lecture room and faced the lunatics in their serried ranks.

In the middle of the front row sat a large, powerfully built man with a small black beard like Willi's own, who looked something like Lenin. This fellow eyed him balefully as he came in as if to say: What have you got that I haven't got? Then why do I sit here while you travel about the country? Willi's beard seemed to have a strange fascination for him: his eyes, which again like Willi's were slightly crossed, kept straying back to it. The other men merely looked sheepish and distract, like most audiences.

Rising to his feet, Willi delivered his speech, which was heard in courteous silence except for an occasional 'louder, please!' from the back: then, sinking down in relief, he mopped his forehead and invited questions.

A silvery-haired old gentleman rose to his feet and, reading from a note in his hand, said: 'I am sure that one and all will agree that the lecturer has treated a difficult subject in masterly fashion. Only one point occurs to me: in the plans he has outlined for transfer of populations and so on, he has not stated who the deciding authority is to be. As I see it, a very considerable limitation of national sovereignty is implied in the scheme as described. Will the lecturer correct me if I am wrong?'

'A very interesting point,' said Willi, obsequiously anxious to please, like all speakers who have not made a success, 'and one which was raised by the editor of the *Old Statesman* when last I gave this lecture. Yes, I think we may take it there will be a very considerable limitation of national sovereignty in the post-war world. Are there any other questions?' he asked, leaning back in his chair and stroking his beard. With something like panic he saw Lenin begin to do the same, using extravagant gestures that burlesqued his own.

A hatchet-faced individual rose next and, clearing his throat, said drily: 'Limitation of sovereignty, eh? May I ask by whom, and in whose interests?'

Cries of 'Ah!' arose on all sides. Lenin gave a sinister smile and, crossing his legs, looked triumphantly at the faces round him.

'By a conglomeration of Powers, and in the interests of world peace,' said Willi, nervously.

'What guarantees have the smaller powers, whose freedom is to be thus drastically curtailed, that they will not be mercilessly crushed out of existence?' asked one lunatic in a voice that shook with emotion.

'That's what I'd like to know,' chimed in another.

'And what if the minorities do not wish to be transferred? Will they be forced? Will strangers come and throw their possessions into sacks and nail boards over their windows?' cried yet another.

'You are thinking in terms of sentimental abstraction, Herr Doktor,' said hatchet-face, folding his arms.

'We have the word of the great Powers who are leading the world out of its present dilemma,' said Willi.

'Having first led us into it,' snarled Lenin, breaking silence at last.

'That is a matter of opinion,' said Willi, stiffly. '*The Times* dealt with the point of guarantees very ably last week. . . .'

'*The Times!* *The Old Statesman!* First one, then the other,' cried Lenin, drumming with his boots on the floor. 'Do you think we take our opinions ready made? What sort of people do you suppose we are?'

'Please calm yourself; of course, each one of you thinks for himself,' said Willi, sweetly patient but commencing to look rather haggard.

'Meaning that otherwise we shouldn't be here,' shouted Lenin implacably.

'I meant nothing of the sort,' said Willi, with a touch of asperity. 'You are making things impossible, my dear sir.'

'Coming it over us with your *Times!*' stormed Lenin.

'Why descend to their level?' said a quiet spare man, who had not spoken before, and who wore an old Rugby tie, 'cut it out, Bingo, you're letting us all down.'

'To hell with the *Old Statesman*,' said Lenin with a strangled sob; but he obediently lowered his voice and sat quiet and good,

only now and again wiping a tear from his eye with an orange pocket handkerchief.

The President of the Society then offered a subdued vote of thanks in a broad Scottish accent, and Willi sped back to London.

‘Na, and how it was?’ asked Kipfel, that evening.

‘Go away, please,’ said Willi, ‘I have no time for you at all.’

‘Na—good,’ said Kipfel, who, stupid as he was, felt the sincerity behind these words. ‘I am going at once.’

Pausing for a moment, he said: ‘Don’t worry about it, actually. Mr. Laufer has found a post as cinema manager in Golders Green. May he keep it, *toi, toi, toi*. So all is well that is ending well, isn’t it?’ And he trotted away with elastic gait and spongily quivering hips.

CECILY MACKWORTH

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

‘Il n’aimait pas Dieu, mais les hommes qu’au soir fauve
Noirs, en blouse, il voyait rentrer dans les faubourgs . . .’

(*Les Poètes de Sept Ans*)

THE seven-year-old child, dressed in his Sunday best, with pomaded hair and rage at his heart, read the Bible with docility and decided to love, not God, but Humanity. The precocity of Rimbaud was so astounding, his mental development so fantastic, that it is possible he really made this decision at an age when other children are absorbed in their dolls and rocking horses. After all, the letters in which he sets out the full and completely developed theory of the poet—‘Voyant’, were written before he was sixteen.

A passionately mystic nature observed two species of Mankind as a scientist observes two sets of cultures. The representatives of God were all around him, beginning with his mother, ‘*La Bouche d’Ombre*’. They toned in wonderfully with the damp, grey landscape of the Ardennes. They were the Bourgeoisie, the people who understood the value of money, who stuck to their

principles and kept an eye on the main chance, who were always sure to succeed because their aims in life were so small that they hardly left room for failure. They represented God smugly and vocally, parading for High Mass on Sundays as troops parade before their General. Thrift replaced love as the greatest of the virtues.

The down-and-outs of a young industrialism never thought of identifying themselves with Humanity, any more than they were conscious of 'the God in the altar of the body', but Rimbaud recognized them. The sordid workmen of Charleville, the over-worked peasants of Roche were his only kinsmen. The early poems are full of a sort of mingled pity and contempt for the poor, passive herd which accepted its misery with a docility which somehow constituted an ultimate betrayal of its own potential grandeur. Sometimes the note is of pure pity: 'Les pauvres Jésus pleins de givre,' sometimes it is all hatred at the unbearable humility, the acceptance of injustice, the refusal of divinity, the base gratitude to the Enemy who insults them by his indifference:

'Ces effarés y sont et ses épileptiques
 Dont on se détourrait hier aux carrefours
 Et, fringalant du nez dans les missels antiques
 Ces aveugles qu'un chien introduit dans les cours;
 Et tous, bavant la foi mendiane et stupide
 Récitant la complainte infinie à Jésus
 Qui rêve en haut, jauni par le vitrail livide
 Loin des maigres mauvais et des méchants pansus.'

(Les Pauvres à l'Eglise)

Rimbaud identifies himself, as he grows up, more and more closely with this section of mankind which is alone worthy of the name of Humanity. He feels for it the horror and attraction implicit in some beloved vice:

'Pitié! Ces enfants seuls étaient ses familiers
 Qui, chétifs, front nus, oeil déteignant sur la joue
 Cachant de maigres doigts jaunes et noirs de boue
 Sous les habits puant la foire et les vieillots
 Conversaient avec la douceur des idiots.'

It is the contrast between Man as he is and as he might be which rouses the extreme limits of rage and pity in the adolescent Rimbaud. There are the two visions. This picture of the poor at

their servile devotions, and the vision of Mankind liberated from Christ, the 'éternel voleur des énergies':

'O! L'Homme relève sa tête libre et fière
 Et le rayon soudain de la beauté première
 Fait palpiter le Dieu dans l'autel de la chair!
 Heureux du bien présent, pâle du mal souffert
 L'Homme veut tout sonder et savoir.'

It is with Mankind, in all its misery and majesty that Rimbaud identifies himself. On behalf of Mankind he decides to attain initiation, to 'penetrate and know everything', until he is capable of throwing down the final challenge to God, of waging the ultimate battle which is to free Man from his quasi-eternal fetters.

But the 'pitiés immondes' to which he indiscreetly admitted were sternly suppressed by Madame Rimbaud in the name of God and morality. Her son, after unparalleled successes at school, refused to matriculate, became sullen and unwashed and slipped from home in the evenings to drink in low-class cafés and scribble 'Mort à Dieu' on the Church walls. The daytime was occupied by the study of magic at the local library, whose shelves are unlikely to have been a fertile hunting-ground in the subject.

Rimbaud set out avowedly to penetrate the universal mysteries and become 'voyant'. 'The poet,' he explains in the famous letter addressed to his master, Monsieur Izambard, 'becomes *voyant* by the long, immense and reasoned derangement of all his senses. He seeks in himself all the forms of love, of suffering of madness. He consumes in himself all the poisons, to retain only their quintessesences.'

Already he begins to suspect the possibility of destroying his own personality in order to become absorbed in a greater Personality. 'Je', he writes, 'est un autre.' He is no longer responsible, in the ordinary, moral sense, for his own actions. He has cast aside the essential Catholic doctrine of free-will and liberated himself by one, enormous blasphemy from the trammels of his childhood.

Rimbaud's sayings about the state of 'voyance', and especially certain passages in the '*Bateau Ivre*', have made some critics believe that he gradually came to think that he could identify himself with God. I believe this is wrong. Rimbaud uses the

word God in many different senses, generally as some universal, abstract power. God in the religious sense, that is, the Catholic God, he took as his mortal enemy. It is not with God, but with God's adversary, Lucifer, that he finally identifies himself when the time comes to crystallize the over-vague idea of Humanity.

At this point it becomes necessary to consider the influence of Baudelaire. There is little mention of this influence in all the immense Rimbaudian bibliography, yet it seems probable that if Baudelaire had never existed Rimbaud would not have been able to carry his theory of the poet-voyant to its last, logical step. Aesthetically, Baudelaire introduced him to the idea that sound, colour and form might be transposed into a sort of divine oneness ('Les couleurs, les sons et les parfums se répondent') which Rimbaud developed in the famous vowel sonnet. Philosophically, he opened the door to a universe which might have been specially created for the younger poet.

The *Fleurs du Mal* had been published in 1857, when Rimbaud was three years old. It was promptly banned and Baudelaire himself sentenced for immorality. It is quite certain that the execrated volume can have had no place upon the meagre book-shelves of Madame Rimbaud, who had firm ideas about the facile path to hell. Equally it cannot have been available in the public library of Charleville or in the private libraries of its strait-laced and gossipy citizens. But Izambard, the advanced young schoolmaster got into trouble for lending to her son books (and notably a work of Victor Hugo) which were incompatible with the moral ideas which she worked so hard to inculcate. If the *Fleurs du Mal* had been among them the skies would probably have fallen, or at least there would have been such an almighty row that history would know all about it.

Yet Izambard must, logically, have shown a copy to his astonishing pupil, for, in the *Lettre du Voyant*, Rimbaud proclaims: 'Baudelaire is the first *voyant*, a king of poets, a real God.' Then, in another letter, we have Rimbaud's own estimate of the debt which he owes to his master. 'La reconnaissance que je vous ai, je ne saurais pas vous l'exprimer . . . il s'agirait de faire quelquechose pour vous que je mourrais pour le faire.' This refers ostensibly to Izambard's protection after one of his flights from Charleville, but Rimbaud was usually inclined to bite the hand that fed him and was not given to gratitude so far as material

benefits were concerned. An initiation at the risk of reputation and a career was more likely to have moved him to such devotion.

Scepticism is a purely cerebral state of mind which flourishes in artificial civilizations and rarely touches the poet. Poetry which is poetry and not merely the product of an intellectual thesis, springs from instinct and fantasy, while the intellect fills the minor rôle of disciplinarian. The poet himself is, almost professionally, a man dominated by mysticism and imagination, the man of Myth rather than of science. His mysticism may be concentrated in the worship of an orthodox God or its edges may blur in an obsession of Celtic twilight. But it will always be there, an essential part of his make-up; poet will be poet, from St. John of the Cross to Yeats.

Running parallel to the main current of European poetry, there is the curious hierarchy of the mystics of Evil. They are the few, the outcasts, the self-destroyers, the rebels, who are seduced by the tragic majesty of Lucifer. These range themselves at the side of the defeated and reserve for the enthroned God a hatred whose violence is at the measure of its object. They are to be found almost exclusively in Catholic countries, where no one tries to deny that sin is a component part of life. They are possessed by that 'amour du sacrilège' to which Rimbaud confessed in the *Saison en Enfer*.

Among the banned poems in the *Fleurs du Mal* which Izambard must have shown to the young Rimbaud, is the Litany to Satan, Baudelaire was at least periodically a Satanist and did not fear to affirm his faith with all the passion of the Spanish mystics: 'Il n'est pas une fibre de tout mon corps tremblant, Qui ne crie—O, mon cher Belzébuth, je t'adore!' In the Litany he invokes Lucifer: 'Dieu trahi par le sort et privé de louanges', and Rimbaud instantly received—at least at my guess—the revelation of an Alternative: the God of his mother and Charleville Sundays or the mysterious and evil beauty of the Fallen Angel, the esoteric divinity reserved for the seer.

It should not be forgotten that Rimbaud had been one of the most brilliant classical scholars that the Lycée of Charleville had ever known. During the whole period of his schooldays he had literally soaked himself in classicism and shown an understanding of the classic spirit which had astonished—and even

worried—his masters. Now, in a single phrase, Lucifer took shape as the very embodiment of classic tragedy, typifying more completely than Oedipus or Orestes the noble being 'betrayed by fate and denied his rightful praise'.

At the same time this Being contained his whole conception of mankind—that is, greatness and nobility reduced to beggary by successful God. 'Je est un Autre' now takes on a new meaning. Rimbaud is Humanity, *may become* Lucifer. His task is to make Humanity conscious of its own degradation. He cannot, being that Other, confine his experiments to mere personal experience. He is conscious of enormous and still vaguely understood responsibilities. 'Il faut que j'en aide d'autres,' he writes some years later. 'C'est mon devoir. Quoique ce ne soit guère ragoutant, chère âme.'

Now we see Rimbaud faced with the two conceptions, God and Satan. Soon these personalities become identified, as they have been through the passage of the centuries, with Construction and Destruction, with Positive and Negative. Rimbaud, brought up in the strictest tenets of the Catholic religion, realized instinctively the truth that Karl Adam was later to express philosophically, that Catholicism is Affirmation, the acceptance of life in every aspect. So with unfaltering logic, he turned to negation, denial and destruction. 'Voici le temps des assassins'—i.e. the age of destruction, of the poet-voyant.

Lucifer—Destruction. Man may become Lucifer by destruction. In one of the prose-poems contained in the collection called *Les Illuminations*, tells of a prince who suspected the existence of unexplored felicities. 'Il voulait voir la vérité, l'heure du désir et de la satisfaction essentiels.' In order to attain this state of essential satisfaction he assassinates all the women he has known (i.e. destroys Beauty). He massacres all his hunting and drinking companions, annihilates all the beautiful beasts of his kingdom, burns his palaces. He hurls himself upon the crowd, dismembers his subjects. Yet the women, the crowds, the golden roofs and the beautiful beasts continue to exist.

One day the Prince is galloping proudly on his horse when a Djinn appears, of incalculable and inadmissible beauty: 'De sa physionomie et de son maintien ressortait la promesse d'un amour multiple et complexe, d'un bonheur indicible, insupportable même. Le Prince et le Génie s'annéantirent probablement

dans la santé essentielle. Comment n'auraient-ils pas pu en mourir? Ensemble donc ils moururent.

Mais le Prince décéda, dans son palais, à un age ordinaire. La Prince était le Génie. Le Génie était le Prince.—La musique savante manque à notre désir.'

Here Rimbaud tells in his own words of the identification by destruction of himself with Lucifer and his subsequent attainment of truth. Note that the Prince destroys not only others, but himself.

* * *

It remained to put these theories into practice—a thing which could not be accomplished in Charleville. Escape became imperative.

Several abortive attempts at flight had left Rimbaud full of bitterness and doubt. One at least, the occasion when he succeeded in joining the soldiers of the Garde Républicaine in their barracks at St. Denis, had left a lasting scar which played its part in shaping his destiny. His experiences among those who, as defenders of the adored Liberty, should have shown at least a glimpse of the divine and satanic fire, left him with a feeling of inalienable disgust. His heart has been stolen, never to be returned:

Ithyphalliques et pioupiesques
Leurs quolibets l'ont dépravés
Au gouvernail on voit des fresques
Ithyphalliques et pioupiesques
O flots adabracadabrantiques
Prenez mon cœur qu'il soit lavé
Ithyphalliques et pioupiesques
Leurs quolibets l'ont dépravé!

Le Cœur Volé

This experience marks the end of the poems which retain the accent of childhood and sometimes, like 'Sensation,' 'Ma Bohème,' 'Au Cabaret Vert,' expresses a sort of lyric innocence and happiness.

So Rimbaud returned home, disgraced and furious. He poured his spleen into the *Premières Communiantes*, the hymn of hate for the 'eternal Thief of energies', then—the culminating point at which the theory of voyance seemed to justify itself once and for all—he produced the miracle of the prophetic and terrible *Bateau Ivre*.

'Come, dear, great soul. You are awaited, you are desired!' wrote Verlaine to the unknown poet of Charleville. He showed the *Bateau Ivre* and some of the other poems to his fellow Parnassiens, who were doubtful and perhaps uneasy, but prepared to make allowances for Verlaine's latest enthusiasm and extend a kindly welcome to its author.

A decent bohemianism characterized the artistic *milieu* of Paris in 1871. The purity or otherwise of a poet's life was still held to have some connection with his poetry, so that a few years later Verlaine was refused admission to the pages of the *Parnasse Contemporaine* on the ground of immorality, just as Baudelaire, a few years earlier, had received a final rebuff from the Académie Française, which disapproved of his equivocal moral standards. Leconte de Lisle and Théodore de Banville, 'le bon maître', presided over Parnasse and set the literary standards of the day. Art for art's sake had become a creed and Beauty a goddess to be worshipped with reverence and devotion. 'L'art,' proclaimed Leconte de Lisle, 'est l'unique révélation du Beau et il relève uniquement'; and again, 'Le monde du Beau, l'unique domaine de l'Art, est, en soi, un infini sans contact possible avec tout autre conception que ce soit'. As for dangerous innovators: 'Il n'y a rien de plus inintelligent et de plus triste que cette excitation vainue à l'originalité propre aux mauvaises époques de l'art'.

Even the younger set, Coppée, Catulle Mendès and Hérédia, could hardly be called revolutionary. Like their elders they approved of Beauty in neatly rhymed stanzas, sought for 'a style as clear as the dawn' and fulminated joyously against the Philistines, Verlaine, Charles Cros and Mérat were the *enfants terribles* of the group. Parnasse recognized their talents but deplored their taste for absinthe. Poets were expected to be gentlemen, although consecrated gentlemen, and these three did not always come up to standard.

Rimbaud, the disciple of Lucifer, arrived. He was tall and gangling, with large red hands and uncouth manners. He spoke with a trailing provincial accent. He seldom washed and had lice. But his worst lapse from taste lay in his youth. The Parnassiens had expected a man and they were offered a child and felt that they had been tricked. Even so, they were ready to be kind, but the child mocked at them, at their principles and at the

Goddess Beauty herself. He served a different and more exigent master and cherished a feeling of superiority which he did not attempt to conceal.

Perhaps his manners might have been excused if his poetry had been in any way to his credit. But he made hay of the sacred laws of versification. 'Unknown discoveries demand new literary forms,' he had written to Izambard. Nothing could be a clearer example of 'L'excitation vaine à l'originalité'. His rhymes were a public scandal. When one considers the shock which Apollinaire administered to French poetry more than fifty years later by refusing to subscribe to the hallowed rule of alternating masculine and feminine rhymes, one can understand what Hérédia, for instance, felt about a verse like this:

'Mais moi, Seigneur, voici que mon esprit vole
Après les cieux glacés de rouge sous les
Nuages célestes qui courent et volent
Sur cent Solognes longues comme un railway.'

'sous les' rhymed with 'railway'! One can almost hear Coppée, at the Café des Vilains Bonhommes squeaking out, '*Mais c'est se moquer du monde!*'

If rudeness and dirt were the more obvious reasons for Rimbaud's failure in Paris, there was another, less immediate, aspect of the affair. He was, and perhaps remains, the least French of French poets. He had none of the classic restraint which controls the passion even of Baudelaire and Verlaine and is an essential part of the French poetic current. His style, far from being as clear as dawn, was as obscure as the murkiest hour between dog and wolf. Later it might be interpreted in the light of Symbolism, but Symbolism was still unheard of. Mallarmé and Laforgue, who were to offer the key to many dark places of the mind, had as yet made no impact on their contemporaries. Rimbaud's images outraged the very essence of Cartesian France and the Parnassiens remained, whatever they thought themselves, unconscious Cartesians.

One of the leaders of the Surrealist Movement recently referred, although approvingly, to Rimbaud's '*images idiotes*'. Literary Paris of 1871 would have agreed with him, and so, no doubt would Rimbaud himself. 'Je m'habituai à l'hallucination simple: je voyais très franchement une mosquée à la place d'une

usine, une école de tambours faite par des anges, des calêches sur les routes du ciel, un salon au fond d'une lac; les monstres; les mystères; un titre de vaudéville dressait des épouvantes derrière moi. Puis j'expliquais mes sophismes magiques avec l'hallucination des mots.' (*Une Saison en Enfer*.)

As a matter of fact, Rimbaud's images are only superficially 'idiotic' in the Surrealist sense. When he says that his hallucination is simple, he means that it is instinctive. The completely Surrealist image is the chance product of the subconscious, while that of Rimbaud never varies from a *sensual* precision which is as rigorous in its own way as the polished gems of Hérédia. The word 'hallucination' is chosen to *explain* the 'magic sophism' of the instinctive image. If the birth of the image takes place in the subconscious, the word in which it is clothed is shaped with the care of a craftsman. It is impossible to find a meaningless word, or one which is not intimately related to the image. Rimbaud's consummate musicianship never falters, even at his wildest.

But Parnasse was still too closely bound by the chains of classicism to accept images which superficial criticism still applauds for their glorious idiocy. The Parnassiens disapproved of Rimbaud as heartily as he despised them. His behaviour was so bad that he was soon banned from the weekly dinners and left to carry on a life of studied debauch with Verlaine, whose own reputation suffered badly from the association. Presently they were entirely ostracized and remained on speaking terms only with Forain and Du Cros. The two friends fled from inhospitable Paris and commenced a carefree life of vagabondage which eventually brought them to London.

Rimbaud's failure among the Parnassiens is important. Whatever show of bravado he cared to put up, it is impossible that a provincial schoolboy should remain entirely unimpressed by his first contact with the great. On some of these men at least he had pinned his faith and their rejection of him cannot have left him indifferent. (Mérat, for instance, although Rimbaud had granted him the honorary degree of *Voyant* on reading his poems, refused to figure in Fantin-Latour's picture, 'Le Coin du Table', because Rimbaud was to be among those depicted.) He had come with a message to explain to these poets how they might become the agency which should raise Mankind from its state of abjection and prepare it to participate in the Luciferian

majesty. They had rejected and scorned him. In a refined and ironic way they had destroyed his illusions as completely as the Republican soldiers had destroyed them at St. Denis. His heart had been stolen again, depraved once more by jeers which no magic waves would ever wash away.

There remained Verlaine, the brother Voyant who had forsaken wife and friends, thrown off security and plunged into debauchery for his sake. Verlaine, the angelic poet and the sordidly feeble man, contained in himself all the elements of that Humanity which Rimbaud adored with such extravagance and which was proving so ungrateful. Verlaine was the stake on which he laid his last wager.

Everything went well so long as the excitement of travel and vagabondage in new countries lasted, but like many more orthodox arrangements the menage could not survive the humdrum routine of house-keeping and wage-earning. The health and nerves of both men were exhausted by systematic debauchery: 'Ma santé fut menacée,' wrote Rimbaud later. 'La terreur venait. Je tombait dans des sommeils de plusieurs jours, et, levé, je continuais les rêves les plus tristes. J'étais mur pour le trépas, et par la route des dangers ma faiblesse me menait aux confins de monde et de la Cimmérie, patrie de l'ombre et des tourbillons.' (*Une Saison en Enfer*.)

In a climate unpropitious for ardour the two men, isolated in the vacuum created by the language problem and in constant financial difficulty, were thrown entirely upon each other's society. Rimbaud, with the growing fear of madness upon him, became increasingly insupportable. He was haunted by the realization that Verlaine was incapable of following him to the logical conclusion of his poetic and philosophical system, and would remain for ever the *vierge folle*. Worse still, he was beginning to doubt the truth of his own conclusions: 'Moi! Moi qui me suis dit mage ou ange, dispensé de tout morale, je suis rendu au sol, avec un devoir à chercher, et la réalité rugeuse à êtreindre! Paysan!'

His disappointment exaggerated Verlaine's failure and soon hatred began to mingle with the remains of the old love. He was driven to a frenzy of irritation by his friend's periodic fits of remorse over the wife and child he had deserted. His scruples seemed to Rimbaud symptoms of his pitiful inadequacy for the divine rôle which he should have filled. Verlaine's self-pity

filled him with disgust. 'Ainsi, j'ai aimé un porc!' he wrote disdainfully at this period.

The quarrel which broke up the London home was a typical domestic tragi-comedy, pitifully and sordidly *human*. The two young men being very low in funds, Verlaine had volunteered to go out and do the day's shopping as economically as possible. Rimbaud, in a horrible temper as usual, sulked at home, wrapped in his unending nightmare. Verlaine returned, after an unsuccessful expedition which had resulted in the purchase of one large herring, which he held unwrapped and dangling from his hand. Rimbaud was watching from the window as he made his appearance and called out scornfully: 'Ce que tu peux avoir l'air cul avec un hareng à la main!' It was his epitaph to Humanity.

Verlaine, furious, hurled away the herring, turned on his heel and disappeared, not to return until the following day. His reappearance heralded a quarrel which ended in his flight to Belgium.

The story of how Rimbaud followed Verlaine to Brussels, of their tentative reconciliations and of the pistol shot which ended in a sentence of two years hard labour on Verlaine, is too well known to need repetition. Rimbaud was probably less wounded by Verlaine's bullet than by his conversion, in prison, to a singularly tearful and sentimental type of piety.

La Saison en Enfer—Rimbaud's farewell to poetry—is one of the greatest confessions of failure in world literature. The whole of the intricate system for which he had sacrificed himself as a very real burnt offering, had broken down. Lucifer has failed him or—an even more agonizing thought—he has failed Lucifer. He had not had the strength to shoulder alone the burden of Humanity and no one had proved worthy or willing to help him in the impossible task. Destruction and negation had destroyed and denied themselves.

Rivière, Claudel and other Catholic critics have seen in the *Saison en Enfer* the proof of Rimbaud's conversion to Catholicism. I believe that they are right in a sense. Rimbaud accepts Christ because he is constitutionally incapable of scepticism. His spirit is cut to the measure of heaven and hell and the material world has little meaning for him. When Lucifer fails he is ready, despising himself, to turn to Christ, but atheism is a solution which does not even occur to him. Without the certainty of the presence of God in one aspect or another he cannot survive.

‘L'esprit est proche; pourquoi Christ ne m'aide-t-il pas en donnant à mon âme noblesse et liberté? Hélas, l'Evangile, a passé! L'Evangile! Evangile!... J'attends Dieu avec gourmandise. *Je suis de race inférieur de toute éternité.*’ He has wiped out the whole of his life as a poet and returned to the point, where, as a little child, he attended gravely at Catechism. He has made the renouncement consciously and with a certain irony, but Christ, whom he is ready to accept as a second-best, is no longer there.

In the *Saison en Enfer* Rimbaud bids good-bye to Lucifer and thus, logically, to himself. He no longer exists as a poet, having nothing to write about and no reason to write. He is gripped in the agony of enforced silence: ‘Par quel crime, par quelle erreur’, he cries, ‘ai-je mérité ma faiblesse actuelle? Vous qui pretendez que les bêtes poussent des sanglots de chagrin, que des morts revent mal, tachez de raconter ma mort et mon sommeil. Moi, je ne puis plus m'expliquer que le mendiant avec ses continuels Pater et Ave Maria. *Je ne sais plus parler.*’

Rimbaud was not quite nineteen years old when he finished *Une Saison en Enfer* and turned his back on poetry. Deliberately, as if he was in fact committing the suicide which the tenacious remnants of Catholic morality forbade him to dare, he set about destroying his old life. The earlier poems and Illuminations remain to us by chance. From now on he consecrated himself to travel, adventure and the unsuccessful pursuit of fortune, but life was, in all but the literal sense, over for him. ‘Quel ennui!’ he wrote from Aden. ‘Quelle vie bête! Que fais-je ici, moi?... Et qu'irais-je chercher ailleurs?’ There is nothing left but meaningless suffering, until the final humiliation of one of the most horrible deaths which can come to a human being.

V. DASKAL

ADVENTURES IN ART UNDER HITLER

I AM venturing to put down a few personal sketches from my experience of art-life in Germany under Hitler, to show how the system affected individual artists and connoisseurs. I myself had a

scholarship at the Düsseldorf Academy under Paul Klee when the Nazis came to power, and until 1939 I spent at least half my time arranging exhibitions and maintaining contact with a great number of the artists belonging to the modern movement in Germany. As a foreigner in that country, I was able to move about more freely and was less anxious about eventually landing up in a concentration camp. I hope the reader will not come to the rash conclusion that because of the official corruption and the obviously untenable ideology of Nazi art, there was necessarily no good art in Germany during this period. That will remain to be judged when the work now accumulating in attics and cellars can be brought out into the open and impartially criticized. But as far as the German public is concerned, the effect has surely been to arouse false expectations as to the kind of thing art is.

One of the most curious incidents in which I was involved took place soon after the appointment of a new director at the museum at Neuss on the Rhine. A close friend of mine, well known for his collection of book-miniatures, came to see me in a state of great excitement, having just made some remarkable finds. 'They are museum pieces!' he exclaimed, and he went on to say that he was in touch with a young S.S. man who had recently inherited some book-miniatures, but as the legacy had to be divided with several other people, they had to be paid off before he could get the remainder of the miniatures. During the next two months I was able to share my friend's enjoyment of his new discoveries, which he was getting in a constant stream through an intermediary—a gallery-owner who had taken the place of one of the most lively and celebrated art-dealers in Germany. This go-between was a nonentity who did not dare to take the risk of purchasing anything himself, except for a few second-rate works. My collector friend was astonished at this fertile supply of masterpieces, which were quite obviously from the same hand as the famous Maximilian Codex that he had often examined in the museum at Bonn. He wanted to put them side by side, but being too busy, he kept postponing the trip, until one day the front page of the book of miniatures was sold to him, with the portrait of the patron Maximilian and the artist's signature exactly as in the Bonn codex. There was no question of the work being faked; he even felt that these pieces were richer and more splendid than the ones he had seen in the museum.

He took the next train to Bonn and called on the director, who looked through his finds and was rather disparaging about their quality and authenticity. My friend insisted on comparing his set with that in the museum, and laughingly remarked: 'Where is your codex anyway? Perhaps I am holding it in my hands at this moment!' The director pooh-poohed the idea, and boasted that it was well known how carefully the treasures were kept at Bonn. Unfortunately, however, he regretted that he could not produce his codex at present, as he had lent it to the director at Neuss, who wanted to give the run of it to a fine fellow who had done such valuable work for the Party that he only needed a doctorate to become a Gauleiter.

My friend's worst suspicions were now confirmed. He rushed back to Neuss, only to find that there was nothing left of the priceless codex but a torn shell. He immediately began an exhaustive search for the missing pages that had not been offered to him, but it was a complicated piece of detective work, as many of the fragments had already been sold twice and had therefore lost their legal status as stolen goods. It required a great deal of persuasion and haggling to recover the scattered parts of the miniature-book, and of course its value as a unique whole was lost for ever. But at least these guardians of culture succeeded in leaving their mark on a priceless manuscript.

Another dramatic incident took place at an auction at Cologne in the summer of 1936. I had gone there with a dealer friend of mine, to advise him on buying some pictures, and his father, a stamp-collector, had come along to prevent us losing our heads in the heat of the bidding. Actually the proceedings were rather cold and dull to start with. It was a rainy day and no one was feeling very lively. The auction was almost over, and people were beginning to think of getting home, when a large and extremely dirty canvas in an ugly ornamental frame was hauled up on to the easel. The bidding went up to 400 marks, more out of respect for the auctioneer, Lempertz, than for any other reason. But suddenly, just as the item was going to be knocked down and the sale declared closed, the picture came to life. An unexpected shaft of sunlight fell through the dusty window and revealed—no one knew quite what. For a few seconds there was a startling incandescence beneath the filth of ages which covered the black-brown pigment. A shudder of excitement went through the

room, but (with the possible exception of a well-known Dutch dealer who dared not show an interest for fear of stimulating the bidding to huge figures) hardly any of us understood what had happened. The bidding jumped to 800 marks as the sunlight faded from the canvas. We got in one bid, but the picture fell to a young man who did not seem much impressed by his acquisition. It was all over so quickly that even the alert and experienced auction-goers were taken by surprise.

As a matter of fact, this collection of pictures had come from the Bonn Museum, which had just been reorganized under a new director appointed by the Nazis. One might have expected him to have had the contents of his cellars thoroughly examined—or even cleaned—before he considered disposing of a bequest; but he preferred to behave in a more off-hand way. It was not until some weeks after the auction that I heard news of the young dealer who had made such a casual purchase. The news was that he had been taken into a lunatic asylum. He had made a profit of 20,000 marks by reselling the canvas, but the shock was too great for his reason when he learnt, a little while afterwards, that in Holland the painting had been discovered to be a lost Rembrandt, and that the Americans were offering more than a million marks for it. Art circles in Germany were extremely bitter at the incompetence of 'cultural' bosses who had thus got rid of one of their national treasures.

By this time most of the older and better-known art-historians had been removed from their positions. There were only a few here and there who, either by good fortune or strategy, were able to hold on and constitute themselves guardians and patrons of art. One of the most prominent of these, whose name it is still unwise to mention, had maintained his influential status by appearing to concede advantages when pressed, though actually his tactical withdrawals enabled him to be of more use to the cultural cause than some of those who had forced the issue and fled. It was a matter for anxious discussion in art circles whether this scholar would now be manœuvred into an untenable situation. The occasion which seemed to make this imminent was the request of Hitler that three very well-known Cézannes in the custody of this director should be exchanged for an extremely sentimental and romantic picture which was in the possession of an Austrian gallery. I wish it were safe to tell the story as the man

himself told it to me, with all the delight of a successful campaign against stupidity; but I can say that by creating delays over a period of months he managed to prevent the deal going through. On another occasion he displayed personal bravery when a crowd of art-lovers visited his premises with knives and pistols. There was also the time when he saved a modern collection in his keeping by having the entire gallery closed for six months while preparing an elaborate exhibition of an early German painter. It would rejoice the heart of a civil servant to see how constructive and beneficial can be the policy of 'masterly inactivity'—especially when truly traditional values are at stake. But these scholars were working almost in isolation, without any possibility of organizing a conspiracy to outwit the savages who had seized control of the national resources. People like my director friend had to rely on personal connexions only, but they set a standard of successful intrigue which many diplomats and politicians might envy.

A flagrant instance of the debasement of values under the 'protectors of culture' was the story which might be called the Conscription of the Gigolos. Responding to the Führer's call—and incidentally finding themselves unemployed after the end of Prohibition—these fascinating creatures came flocking back from America, where they had learnt all the tricks of the underworld, and eagerly placed their talents at the disposal of the Reich. There was a certain von Wierth in particular, who had become a millionaire several times over by applying gangster methods to the art-dealing business. He grouped around him thirty young men, and with their aid he ran the whole night-life of Düsseldorf. His assistants all lived above the £1,000-a-year level, and outside their headquarters in two enormous houses in the Königsallee you could always see an impressive parade of Rolls-Royces. In their luxurious premises they exhibited tenth-rate paintings that looked like enlarged postcards of the most sickly variety, thickly varnished and in ridiculous bombastic gold frames. For each of these monstrosities they charged anything from 1,000 marks—a sum which included (though no auditor was required to assess it) the cost of drinks, suits, jewellery, hotels, and above all the perfumes which were needed to make themselves and their wares attractive to the clients.

The methods of these art-racketeers deserve to be ranked with

those of the cutpurses and tricksters of Elizabethan London. Their first precaution was to obtain letters of recommendation from the Party leaders, certifying that they were doing 'cultural work of national importance'. To secure this support, they got hold of a few rather inferior romantic German pictures, of the sort that were going up in value owing to the boosts of the propaganda ministry; and by presenting these pictorial tips to the gratified officials, they were insured against interruption in their valuable duties. But they did not trust to the Party alone for their commercial success, and I shall try to describe their other activities as they were boastingly told to me by one of the salesmen themselves.

The procedure was to load up a limousine with carpets and pictures, one of the gigolos posing as a prosperous magnate and another as his chauffeur or valet. They would stop in a provincial town and study the telephone book and the geography of the place. Then they would call on one of the leading citizens—or better still on his wife, if he was at the office. They would announce in a lordly way that their car had broken down, and that they would like to come in and wait while the repairs were being done. Once inside the house, they would admire anything they saw on the walls, and would mention casually that they happened to have some pictures in the car which they were bringing from the collection of an aunt who had just died. The pictures would be fetched and displayed, and in a joking way some of them would be hung up for comparison. If the householder or his wife were alone without witnesses, there was always the chance of pretending six months later that the pictures had really been sold, though at the time they would be carelessly left behind as a loan. A favourite device was to make the backs of the pictures very dirty, so that they would somehow leave a mark on the wall. If some of his friends had been present, the reluctant owner would often have to defend his picture later on, so as not to appear a fool and lose caste in business circles. Sometimes another car, also manned by these ingenious fellows, would happen to be stranded in the same remote district a month or two later, and fabulous sums would be mentioned in connexion with one of the pictures, so that the astonished client would come to the conclusion that he had behaved very astutely and had the chance of acquiring something very valuable. This second contingent

would present themselves as connoisseurs and critics. They were able to get away with this because, since Hitler's pronouncement that criticism was only a destructive force and could no longer be permitted, there was no acknowledged standard of artistic values. Hitler's policy of replacing criticism by 'art-appreciation' suited von Wierth and his colleagues very well, and caused the price of their goods to appreciate rapidly. The State was rooting out degenerate and ungermanic work, and at the same time was forcing citizens to invest in works of art of some kind or other. Thus an enormous demand was artificially created, and the gigolos were only too happy to satisfy it. They devoted themselves unsparingly to the manufacture and distribution of pictures which had not even received the love of their makers—perhaps the most cynical paintings that have ever been put on canvas.

One day I was sitting in a bar with some of these strange dealers, and was having an amusing time listening to their adventures, when they began to take pity on me, and said they wanted to help me to a more prosperous life. Next morning I received a deputation, who after examining my pictures said they were not used to dealing with such stuff, and that it was only very seldom that they came across people with queer tastes; but still, they were willing to give me a contract. This would involve my producing four pictures a week for them at 50 to 100 marks each, according to the number of square feet they contained. I would be required to sign the works, and in view of their heavy expenses, they would sell them for something like 1,000 marks each. As this was against the profiteering laws, I would have to back them up in case of inquiries. When I objected that unfortunately my imagination might not be very fertile in providing suitable subjects, they handed me a packet of postcards, and advised me to start by copying each of them a dozen times.

As I have a great deal of natural curiosity, and as I had a certain immunity through being a foreigner in Germany, I was able to take some part in what might be called the underground art-movement, and to observe the changing fortunes of the various artistic circles. It was an interesting study to notice which of the artists altered their colour to suit the new conditions, and generally one was not surprised when they did so. In other cases one could not admire too highly the endurance of those who were prepared to suffer poverty and live the life of dogs rather

than compromise their integrity. All the time the authorities were putting pressure on them and trying to mould them into more convenient shapes. Goebbels, for instance, promised fabulous rewards to the right type of artist, but he threatened with brutal penalties those who ventured to uphold non-party standards. For these worthless animals he prescribed a diet of herring-bones. This doctoring of the more modern artists soon increased the revolutionary fever of the patients, which had hitherto been in many cases very slight. By this time, most trades in Germany had been subjected to a complicated series of registrations, but it was still hard to get at the free artist, as the total mobilization of labour had not yet been introduced. It was easy enough to suspend all grants and scholarships, and to make the artists dependent on the dole—luckily they still had that right. The newspapers switched on propaganda to persuade relatives and benefactors that playing about with paints was a shameful and futile occupation, unless carried out in strict accordance with official formulæ. Then a law was made to ensure that all artists who received the dole should have their studios inspected, and be compelled to bring specimens of their work to be judged by the manager of the local labour exchange. Many of the younger painters found themselves stranded as a result, and were forced to turn their talents to the more nationally significant work of building motor roads.

Private patrons founded an organization to look after artists who were in difficulties, but subscribers who thoughtlessly included this expenditure in their tax returns soon had a visit from a smart man from the cultural ministry, who, after complimenting them on their interest in art, first advised and then demanded that the sum in question should be handed over to the art department of the State for much wiser use. One of the most admirable of these private patrons was a lady of over seventy, closely related to a rather stout Nazi leader. She had the courage and authority to poke fun at a gathering of industrialists and extract from them astonishing monthly subscriptions, which helped to keep a number of young artists going. On her estate she used to have a small hotel, mostly occupied by suppressed artists, who enjoyed complete freedom there. She paid all the bills, and left the guests to come and go as they pleased and argue about their needs with the hotel staff just as they would anywhere else, without their

feeling that they might offend her. I mention this refuge because it was such a perfect contrast to the usual places where artists struggled to survive. It was a paradise to people who knew nothing but interference and persecution elsewhere. This charming lady also tried, with some American friends, to help the German sculptor Barlach to emigrate, and I undertook to visit him on their behalf. It was extremely difficult to obtain admission to his country refuge, and I had to wait a quarter of an hour while faces peered at me round the corners of blinds and through the cracks of doors. I had to go and see him several times before anything like a friendly reception was possible, and even then it was too late to persuade him to make the move. He kept getting up and looking out of the window or into the next room to see if he was being spied on. He had already hidden most of his sculptures, and before long his work ceased altogether when he became a patient in a mental home.

There was a continually expanding group of sympathizers round this old lady, and it was touching to get a telegram suddenly from the other side of Germany to say that somebody who was touring round the country would come and see one's pictures on a certain date. People used to make pilgrimages from a considerable distance to meet a kindred spirit and encourage any artist trying to do honest work. In this way occasional exhibitions of modern paintings became possible, though the painters were mostly foreigners from a country whose friendship was sought by the Reich. For instance, on the morning of Hitler's pact with Mussolini, an exhibition of futurist works could be shown, and there were many laughing faces when the Gaukulturreiter or some more eminent person had to make the opening speech. But the climax of this series of diplomatic exhibitions was definitely the collection of French paintings in Berlin which François Poncet, the French ambassador, helped to arrange. It was opened by Goering, but Hitler was present and could not restrain his temper when he saw some of the cubist exhibits. When Hitler made an angry outburst against 'negroid art', Poncet replied very courteously that the exhibition was representative of France and her culture, and that the French empire certainly included a number of negroes. It was sometimes bewildering to the public, shortly after being marched into an exhibition of degenerate art, to have to listen to a sugary talk on

the aims of futurism. There were several private galleries that persisted in showing modern art, but they had many difficulties. Artists from France were not much interested in selling pictures in Germany and having to spend their money there, and the market was liable to sudden fluctuations. In general the demand for modern French paintings was greater than the supply, but the Nazis intimidated collectors by saying in their papers that it was now time to make a thorough search through the private collections and weed out undesirable works. This caused a rush of collectors hunting for painters to copy their catalogued pieces, so that they could hide the originals until the storm had blown over. As a result of this they made few fresh acquisitions.

But there were occasions when the confusion was partly helpful to the modern painters, by making the public uncertain what sort of work really had official support. In this way the rigidity of Nazi dogma was considerably softened, and various loopholes appeared in the crazy structure. The most ridiculous moment was when Hitler was confronting the selection committee of his private show at the House of German Art in Munich—a place which was usually called the White Sausage Palace on account of its grotesque pillars. I heard from one of the unfortunate selectors that Hitler was enraged to see that in so many of the laboriously executed landscapes the German heroes were posed against sunsets. Hitler thought this showed a deliberate misunderstanding on the part of artists as to what the Third Reich was all about. He insisted that only sunrises could do justice to its epic spirit.

In the 'twenties and early 'thirties a large number of books and articles on modern art had been published, and nearly all the provincial museums were proud of having quite representative collections of modern paintings, so that even after the systematic cleansing which the new Government carried out, there were still enough examples to arouse the curiosity of the younger generation, and make them feel that there was a sphere of experiences that was purposely hidden from their reach. Groups of students used to make bicycle excursions to Holland and Belgium to see modern exhibitions; they carried big stores of food in their rucksacks, as they were only allowed to take out ten shillings each when leaving the country. I myself was invited by members of the Art History faculty at Bonn to arrange discussions on

modern art. The university authorities were well aware that these unofficial lectures were taking place, just as they winked at the banned books which were circulating from hand to hand, and which helped to keep the youth in touch with what was going on in the art world in Paris and elsewhere. There was a remarkable response to my talks, and though some of the pupils had to be in S.S. uniform, they still showed a keen interest. Altogether the atmosphere of conspiracy was favourable to the development of a really persistent talent, and it was surprising how much understanding these young people managed to acquire.

It was still just possible to be an artist, but you had to be careful not to show the fact in your dress or behaviour. I remember going with some friends to a wine-place which had been for generations a resort of the intelligentsia, a quiet and peaceful place which used to be valued for its privacy, but which had lately been invaded by the swashbuckling élite of the Nazi Party. One of my companions had hair which was not completely cropped, though it was not long enough to be really eccentric. At the next table the now notorious Terboven was making the night hideous with some of his S.A. rowdies, and before long one of these obliging gentlemen had begun snipping away at my friend's mane with the long pirate's cutlass that such people are fond of carrying about to inspire the population. My friend was fairly drunk, and thought the best thing to do was to return the favour by smearing the chap's nose with wine. One of the old waiters was very much shocked by the liberties that the uncongenial officials were taking, and in his shaky way he managed to totter between the two tables just as a rough house was developing, and by dropping his tray while somebody else was playing about with the light switches, he succeeded in creating a diversion so that we could slip out by the back entrance. Luckily we had a friend with a car round the corner, and as the White Mice (the political police) raided the place by the front door, we drove sedately past on the other side. None of us was tracked down afterwards, but it was certainly one of the most eventful haircuts at which I have ever been present.

The last story I am going to tell hardly needs any comment, as the reader will by this time have an impression of the nervous strain and hysteria which naturally prevailed in those days. So I will give the facts briefly without trying to interpret the motives.

It was at carnival time in May 1937, and I had lent my studio to a group of the youngest artists to hold a celebration, as I was having a party somewhere else. Coming back to my place in the evening, I was embarrassed to hear a tremendous din going on: all down the street I could hear the sounds of Brecht's song from the Drei Groschen Oper, and the forbidden strains of the Marseillaise—especially the verse, 'Contre nous le tyrannie'. But when I reached my studio I was absolutely struck dumb at seeing my life-size lay-figure rigged up to look like Hitler, hanging on an improvised gallows from the ceiling. Round it the whole crowd was doing a frenzied ritual dance, slashing the figure with pen-knives and flogging it with anything they could lay hands on. Then somebody jumped up on a table and began to declaim a mock oration about the glorious deeds of the departed, while someone else was binding a distemper brush to his neck as a symbol of his professional accomplishments. We now had all the elements for a primitive orgy, which began to develop spontaneously in all directions. I quite forgot my anxiety until I found myself in the midst of a procession bearing the corpse through the streets, with lighted torches to honour the memory of the unfortunate hero who so loved organizing these firelit ceremonies at the slightest excuse.

The procession stopped at the Industry Club, where he had made his only speech to our town—incidentally it had been received with so little enthusiasm that he had avoided returning there after he came to power. Then the mock funeral wound its way through the old part of the town, where the carnival was at its height and everyone was feeling violently alive. Passers-by looked carelessly at our doll, then suddenly realized what it was and rushed away. Others joined us without any idea of what was going on, simply attracted by the crowd that was resolutely moving forward. Eventually, after dipping our Guy Fawkes in the river, we came to a big wine-place that was bristling with S.S. toughs—luckily we had seen none in the streets on our way. The figure, which was still just recognizable, was mercifully propped against the stove, and a great many more toasts were drunk to the immortal memory. A man in uniform, whom I had met casually at a party, came up and said: 'You must be mad! What in hell's name are you up to? I must clear out at once, or I shall have to report you.' By this time our group was completely

out of control. The doll was smoking like a poisonous cigar, so we threw it out into the street among the paper streamers and toy balloons and confetti. At various stages it had lost a hand or a leg, so by now it was a mangled relic, and the mob kicked it about without realizing what it was, or how much primitive satisfaction they were giving to our suppressed impulses. Our whole band dispersed quickly, and though there were rumours flying about, the trap never actually closed on us, and after lying low for a few days we were able to meet again. It was certainly a surprise not to be punished for taking part in this blasphemous ceremony. We felt as if we had tapped an ancient magical source, and set forces in motion that would finally exorcise the demon.

WHERE SHALL JOHN GO?

A reply to Antony Bourne

DEAR JOHN,

It is rude of me to attempt a contradiction of Antony Bourne's entertaining letter to you about America. If you will leave your correspondence about open, you must expect this sort of thing.

Almost everyone is most at home in his own country, region and set. Some people cannot survive transplanting. You are obviously not one of these or you would never have considered going anywhere. If you share with me the growing-habits of the trailing ivy, it is quite possible to leave your main stem planted in England and still set down secondary roots in any of a number of places, deriving a variety of nourishment from these strange soils. Should it ever be necessary for you to go to America you would, with a slight effort to adapt to its newness, find it neither so horrible nor so humorous as Antony Bourne implied.

I suggest that you spend no more time looking at the Grand Canyon than you would at the Giant's Causeway. It is extraordinary that Nature should have produced either, but long contemplation of them is apt to be fruitless and long habitation near them unrepaying except to guides.

You would probably like New England. There are four distinct seasons (Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter), each pleasant in its distinct way. Parts of the Berkshires—a name which we insist on mispronouncing, although our ancestors tried to instruct us properly by spelling it Barkshire, are rather like the Swiss foot-hills. The country is restful, if cow-bells and sibilant pine-trees do not disturb you when you are at work.

It is still possible in most parts of America to be miles from a bill-board, and even your nearest neighbour. The inhabitants, their manners, customs and peculiarities would always be interesting to so inquiring and sympathetic mind as yours.

As to the cities, all of the industrial sections will remind you of Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool, but as you seldom went to these, I cannot believe that you would seek out their American cousins. In defence of Cleveland, it has its own symphony and one of the finest small museums in the country. You should really see their three El Grecos, their delightful Watteau and their very impressive mediæval metal work. You are, of course, under no more compulsion to attend the Elk's meetings in an American city than you are to go to Rotary luncheons in London.

New York's true social life, as is so often the case in a large city, takes discovering. You won't find it fully expressed at the 'Twenty-One' nor at the fashionable 'Colony' any more than I have found the hub of London culture to be the Dorchester.

You will certainly not expect the average American businessman to show any greater interest in the arts than the average British business-man. The exceptions will be equally frequent. It is also possible in America to find plumbing that does not function properly and an occasional mind that does. In the homes of the cultured and creative you would hear conversation which bore a sufficient resemblance to the sort which delights you here, so that, in spite of the differences in accent and education, you might possibly be quite stimulated.

As to the housing situation, I shouldn't advise Greenwich village either, unless you have always longed for a flat in Bloomsbury. It is, however, convenient to the centre of town, fifteen minutes by any of three underground or four bus lines, and does offer flats in converted nineteenth-century houses at reasonable rentals. As you never saw fit to expend an inordinate part of your

income on an elaborate establishment in Mayfair, I can see you living in New York quite happily a block beyond the geographic limits of the fashionable sections.

My servant, pre-war, was as happy as a colt with Thursday night and Sunday afternoon off. She never left at night until the dinner dishes were cleared and washed, with only the average breakage. Since the war the good servant in America is becoming as rare as the polite waiter in any country.

The very rich are apt to be inattentive and seasonal hosts at best. I don't imagine that you would mind their comings and goings in the States any more than you did when their London equivalent disappeared into the Riviera. If you do mind, there will always be at least one hostess who thinks you rather a pet and who will try to carry you off to the North or South, depending upon the temperature.

Hollywood, I must admit, is a trial to the most aggressively loyal American. There are two famous deposits of modern paintings there, one the great Arensburg collection, the other belonging to the film's 'tough guy', Edward G. Robinson. Hollywood's chief concern is with the motion picture industry. It does manage to produce slick, extravagant, profitable films which find a wide market in England. Lively experiments in form and content it leaves to the New York stage.

If clarifying your personal religion is of any importance to your work, I urge you to brave Hollywood's orange groves, monstrous architecture and fantastic inhabitants, to hear Swami Prabhavananda speak. He is, despite Bourne's description, one of the great living mystics, which explains the interest which he has for three such brilliant men as Huxley, Heard and Isherwood. At first hearing his accent is strange. You, however, who are so well trained by your reading of James Joyce, to understand the thought although the words sound slightly unlike themselves, should have no trouble in following. What evolves is the purest and most tolerant religious leadership that I know.

There is no semblance of schism between Huxley, Heard and Isherwood. The first two are regular contributors to Isherwood's magazine. When last heard of Isherwood was correcting the manuscript of Huxley's new novel.

You will be pleased, as one of Isherwood's admirers, to hear that he is at work on a novel of his own. I hope that it will

prove my strongest argument in favour of your going to America.

England is an old country with a mature culture. America is still a bouncing adolescent. If a British author has a sufficiently youthful turn of mind to come out and play with the kiddies, it might well prove instructive to them and to him.

It is really unfair to make comparisons between any two countries unless you align them accurately vista to vista and strata to strata. This done and the inevitable differences in individuals discounted, it is possible to sift out the remaining qualities which are indisputably national.

The British financier will be more at home with the American business man than he would be with you, John, and you would undoubtedly prefer the company of the American author.

WILLIAM ROEHRICH
Cpl. U.S. Army

STEPHEN SPENDER LESSONS OF POETRY 1943

READING the year's poetry, for the third year now, I cannot help sometimes wishing that instead of schools of poets, there were schools for poets. In all the arts today, there are a great many people conscious of the general æsthetic effects of art: the paint in painting, the colour in music, the purity in poetry. One goes to exhibitions of painting, where, although few things are good, no painting is as obviously bad and vulgar as three-quarters of the paintings in any Royal Academy show. One reads anthologies, such as the two volumes of *Poems from the Forces*, where no poem is as obviously bad as a quarter of the poems in *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, and yet in the general blur of poetic good taste, it is extremely difficult to hunt out what is distinguished. Impressionism, imagism, etc., in the arts, have taught numbers of people to be half-æsthetic, just as masses of people who read the newspapers are half-educated. But the total effect is an all-pervading blur in the arts, and the critic of contemporary literature who has to examine poems and novels feels as though he were condemned to look at innumerable photographs of objects slightly out of focus.

Actually, in the past, poetic schools have had aims which amounted to a syllabus. For an Elizabethan to write blank verse, for an Augustan to write heroic couplets, involved a discipline which we recognize in all good blank verse or heroic couplets.

However, today, we have no such disciplined objective formal aims in art. In matters of technique, we live in an irremediably romantic age. That is to say, there is no accepted style of the time, no blank verse line, or heroic couplet, which is the common aim of all artists. The lack of a traditional style explains

the extraordinary confusion of stylistic aims which is to be found in any anthology of contemporary verse. Every poet is, stylistically a law unto himself, and the critic judges a modern poet by attempting to measure his personal style against his personal subject matter.

Since there is no objective grand style in our age, there is a tendency for poets (indeed for painters also) to arrive, after a short period of experimenting, at a kind of Lowest Common Multiple of personal style, which is a mixture of personal subject matter and free verse technique, both curbed by inability to develop beyond a certain stage. The autobiographical subject, the blurred technique, are both symptoms of this inability to get outside one's own subject and one's own manner.

If this account of the contemporary situation in poetry be just, an obvious reaction would be to blame 'free verse' and experimentation for the blurred standard of contemporary colourless good taste, and to recommend a return to writing in accepted forms. Such an 'obvious reaction' is, though, one of the dangers of the present situation. Experiment, the search for new forms, the discovery perhaps of a form as objective and powerful as blank verse, suited to drama and narrative today, are more than ever desirable. But if experiment is to lead to strength, instead of declining into the weakness of a general slackening of the demands in rhythm and rhyme, then poets must vary their experiments with exercises in the old forms. They should, moreover, constantly search not merely for novelty, but for new ways of using old forms. The sonnets of Gerard Manley Hopkins, the numerous exercises of Auden in old forms, the Aubade of William Empson, the translation of the *Georgics* by Cecil Day Lewis, and his numerous poems in regular metres, show how much there is to be gained from putting new wine into old bottles. All these poets, when they write *vers libre*, bring to it the strength that comes from an athletic vigour which has led them to develop their powers further than they would have done by exploring their personal limitations. The great advantage of objective form and traditional subject matter is that it thus gets outside and at the same time strengthens the subjective impulse. In an age of experiment it is as necessary to experiment backwards as forwards; to recover the past as to explore the future.

In the past, most composers have been virtuosi, although playing an instrument superbly well has no obvious connection with composition—indeed, it might at first sight seem to be a disadvantage. A poet should, if possible, acquire a virtuosity in interpreting the great poetic achievements of the past, as Mozart, Brahms and Beethoven had in playing the works of their predecessors and contemporaries. For a poet, translating foreign poetry is the best possible exercise in interpretation. A poet's aim as a translater (from this viewpoint) should not be absolute accuracy, but to return to the source of the poet's inspiration and to create a parallel poem in the English language. Thus the poet gains sympathy with poetic experiences outside his own, and with techniques outside the ones he would use to express his own experience. Poets in the past have devoted enormous powers to the unrewarding task of translating. Today, there seems a regrettable tendency to treat translators as a race apart. Yet a translator is no good unless he happens also to be a poet. It is obvious, for example, that Mr. Maurice Bowra is a poet, and therefore his translations from

the Russian, and those from other languages, fall into a class of their own. Perhaps one day we shall enjoy the original poems of Maurice Bovra. In Frances Cornford's translations, we also have the great advantage of renderings by a poet of accomplishment in her own language.

So poets can go to school and do exercises. All the great poets of the past and present have done so, with few exceptions, though the schooling of the moderns has been less direct and obvious in method, since modern poetry has no technical aims binding all poets to a common discipline. In a serious poet whose work has appeared this year, David Gascoyne, we see the Exercise in his poems written in French, whilst in Miss Raine's poems we see how enormously her work has been widened by the use to which she has put the formal influence of Dante's *Terza Rima*.

But poetic schooling can teach more than exercises. The really important lessons are those of the eye, the ear, the athletic muscles and, indeed, all the senses. A poet can go a long way without a developed heart, but he can get nowhere at all without a developed eye, or ear. The aim of poems is to produce sensuous experiences, quite obviously of ear and eye, more subtly of muscle, and even of thought. The poet must ask continually of his lines: 'Do they make the reader see, or hear, or feel, this experience which I am trying to create?' Every impression which the poet wishes to create in a poem must be new, and it is safe for the poet to assume that the reader knows nothing of the experience which he is trying to create. War poetry and poetry of violence is particularly difficult to write because the images the poet uses mean either too much to the reader, or too little. A bomb means either the bomb which fell next door, in which case the reader ceases to think the poem, and thinks his own experience, or else it means the thousand tons rained last night on Berlin, which are beyond our comprehension. It is difficult to create experiences which are too close to us in the real world, within the ordered world of an imaginative use of language.

A lady, explaining the up-to-date principles on which she was educating her children, said to me once: 'I'm trying to make them see the connection between Mickey Mouse and *Æschylus*'. This remark has the kind of whimsical, pointed originality, based on a juxtaposition of ideas not obviously related to each other, which is to be found in much contemporary verse. We feel ourselves to be more poetical than the Victorians, because we are not so easily shocked by incongruous associations of ideas. Accordingly, we mock Lord Tennyson, conscious of our own superiority. Here is Mr. D. S. Savage shoving his well-worn halfpence on a well-worn board:

Lord Tennyson walked pensively from the green plush sitting-room
To pat the head of the mastiff on the lawn.

The pampas-grass grew round the Crystal Palace
Whose splendour put the Palace of Art to scorn.

The grimy buffers of industry had shunted his carriage
Down a dead siding where even the air was dead.
He had taken a look out of the sooty window.
'Trespassers will be prosecuted' the notice read.

The point of this little Audenesque folly is that history has revealed to us the volcano under the Victorian world. Our claim to superiority over the

Victorians lies in our realizing that conventional attitudes cannot shut out the grime and soot of reality. A volcanic restlessness causes the associations of images in our minds to be much freer than those of the Victorians. Mr. Savage again:

This sodden evening mortuary peace
Enwraps the drenched suburban groves
Brahms pumping slowly from the radiogram
Swells over pavements swept with rain
Boughs drag the heavy air with noisy birds
The week-end cyclists race for home.

Here Mr. Savage's superiority is maintained in his condescending attitude to Brahms (unless the reader is expected to sympathize with him for his poor quality radiogram). Otherwise, I cannot see that the lines are in any way an advance on any minor verse, Victorian or of any time. Let the reader apply the test of the senses to the above lines. If a comma is inserted after 'evening', a full-stop after 'groves', and another full-stop after 'rain', the lines will be seen to be a description of a dull evening. The claim to originality of the lines is found to rest on three things: (1) their lack of punctuation; (2) Mr. Savage's taste in music, which is conventionally up to date and bad; (3) the line 'Boughs drag the heavy air with noisy birds'. This line seems quite out of place in the photographic picture presented by the other lines. One wonders, seeing the rest of the picture, how the noisy birds attune themselves to pumping Brahms. The picture is confused, and the last line with the well-placed word 'race', seems the only living image.

I do not ask the reader to agree with me in every detail of criticism. But I ask him to apply the test of seeing, and then the test of hearing, and of whatever other senses seem to be effected, to lines such as those quoted. I ask him not to be taken in by lack of punctuation, ideologies and negative attributes such as lack of rhyme and rhythm, by which some poets distract their readers.

In contrast to Mr. Savage, here are some lines by Geoffrey Grigson:

I look at the conifers: the blue row of leeks
The buddleia now naked, and the Michaelmas daisies:
I can feel with its tassels the gentle cloth
On the table inside: and the tall dog, gone white
At the mouth, waves his tail and goes lazily
Between the sweet shop and chapel.

Now this is honest description. Mr. Grigson says 'I look' and he does look. Mr. Savage seems to say 'I'm superior to Tennyson and Brahms', thus, like a conjuror distracting the reader's attention from the scene which he describes.

Mr. J. F. Hendry is seriously trying to say something, but he also presents us with blurred, unfinished effects. We strain our eyes and ears, but although we feel that some real experience was felt by Mr. Hendry, he does not convey it to us:

I have seen the secret city
Where Pity walks like a wave
And glad as tides are glad
Sad bridals mock the brave.

A city, you may say, whose rivers
 Bridged by sighs of men,
 And winged by lion wishes
 Mount beyond all ken.

A city where walls of water
 Adrift on an ocean's breath
 Crown the moat of darkness
 With sepals wreathing death.

Timid are we who walk
 Its broad avenues of Love,
 Shy and blind but bound
 By the sweet stars above.

This is evidently the New Romanticism, since there must be some reason for such an extraordinary vagueness. The reader is willing not to demand a realistic appearance of this city of imagination, especially since Mr. Hendry is evidently trying to say something which is vivid to him. But there is no point in pretending that any clear vision emerges. A city whose rivers (bridged by sighs and winged by lion wishes) mount beyond all ken, is the picture presented in lines 4-8. What does one see when one reads them? Only a vagueness.

Referring Mr. Hendry back to the Romantics, it is surely true to say that the admirable quality of romanticism was the precision with which Keats, nearly always, and Shelley often, defined their dreams. With Mr. Hendry we feel that he had a dream, but he has already forgotten it before he started to put it down on paper. Mr. Hendry is a sincere writer, and if he can spur his imagination to a greater audacity of communicativeness, he may be very good.

In case it appears to the reader that I am merely out of sympathy with Mr. Hendry's romantic world, or his spiritual aspirations, or his love of past modes, I hasten now to refer him to the poems of Lawrence Durrell, David Gascoyne, and Edwin Muir, each of which has one or more of these qualities, and in all of which I find much to admire. Durrell is a poet who has lived long in Greece, and he is soaked in the Greek landscape, the Greek climate, the Greek ghosts. His best poems, quiet, assured, are word-paintings in which there is no false colour. His poetic world is derived essentially from the Eastern Mediterranean, and yet it is neither a tourist's nor a scholar's view of scenery and history, it is a world of Mr. Durrell's own, and it seems to me that the best of these poems are worthy to be set beside Landor:

A song in the valley of Nemea:
 Sing quiet, quite quiet here.

Song for the brides of Argos
 Combing the swarms of golden hair:
 Quite quiet, quiet there.

Under the rolling comb of grass,
 The sword outrusts the golden helm.

The publication of David Gascoyne's *Poems 1937-1942* may count as the

most important event in poetry in 1943 (the volume did not appear till January 1944, but it is dated on the title page as 1943). Gascoyne writes poetry with a singleness of mind which is only present, amongst contemporary poets, in the rarest instances. There is every reason why in our totalitarianized world, the poet's whole being should not be directed towards poetry. Even in T. S. Eliot's later work there is an air of preoccupation with things outside the poem in hand, revealed in the self-consciously sententious passages. Auden's very virtuosity produces the effect of each phase in his work only being a part of himself. The feeling of a poet writing each poem with his whole self to day is, indeed, very rare. And Mr. Gascoyne achieves this rare virtue, even if we feel, as with Cowper, that the wholeness of the poetry may come out of the man himself having a somewhat incomplete personality. Mr. Gascoyne's world is a terrible one, which does not matter. What may matter, in the long run, is that it is also an unhealthy one. I do not use the word 'unhealthy' here censoriously, but to define the kind of limitations which I feel in the very clearly charted scene of the poem called *Noctambules*:

Along the Rue Guynemer
Where as the wheezing chimes
of Ste. Sulpice strike three,
In his tight attic high
Above the street, a boy
With a white face which dreams
Have drained of meaning, writes
The last page of a book
Which none will understand.

This has the desperate excitement which we associate with absinthe, rather than the despair of tragedy. It is exciting, none the less, and beautiful. The despair is at second-hand, it is not the immediate facing of fire and terror. Perhaps tragedy through a veil of self-pity and drugs is the only tragedy we are able to write of today, because it is only people who are disqualified from belonging to the totalitarian conflicts, by ill-health or by neurotic hypersensitivity, who are able to devote themselves completely, as Keats, and Tennyson, and Browning, devoted themselves, to poetry. The atmosphere of Christian conversion in Gascoyne is seen through the same veil:

An English drunkard sits alone
In a small *bistro* in Les Halles
And keeps rehearsing the Lord's Prayer
In a mad high-pitched monotone
To the blue empty air.

Ah, shades of Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson!

After Gascoyne, the poetic event of the year is, I suppose, the publication of Kathleen Raine's volume, *Stone and Flower*. David Gascoyne's poems are fluid, and seem to flow naturally out of a semi-conscious state of mind. As Miss Raine's title indicates, her flowers are wrung out of a stony land. The rather terrifying poem 'Invocation' expresses her determination to wring poetry out of her experiences:

Let my body sweat
 let snakes torment my breast
 my eyes be blind, ears deaf, hands distraught
 mouth parched, uterus cut out,
 belly slashed, back lashed . . . etc. etc.

if only the lips may speak,
 if only the god will come.

Such Cassandra-like determination has something admirable about it, and, indeed, it may be that a woman can only be an artist in the spirit of the Vestal Virgins. Miss Raine does succeed in producing line and stanzas of crystalline clarity, passionate yet gemlike.

A little rain falls out of amethyst sky;
 if there were a rainbow, it would be on the ground.
 If I were here, that single swallow would be I,
 if these green trees are heavy, their weight is in my hand.

In Miss Raine's poems, as in those of Gascoyne and Durrell, there is an order which springs out of the natural sense of proportion of the imagination. To develop the power of the imagination to create whole sequences of images, requires a withdrawn habit of mind, and to express such images in words requires an effort of attention and inattention which is similar to prayer.

The concentration of prayer is, indeed, the solution which some of the better modern writers find to the problem of writing in modern conditions. Their poems are prayers, meditations set aside from their everyday life. Edwin Muir is a case in point, and his title *The Narrow Place* shows the sense of seclusion, as do those of the books by Miss Raine and Mr. Durrell. Mr. Muir is also a poet whose work is the fruit of concentration, which is as much as to say he is not an easy poet. He is not easy, and his work lacks something of spontaneity. But the reader who takes the trouble to accustom himself to Mr. Muir's stiff, almost heraldic imagery, will have his reward in contact with a grave, thoughtful, sensitive and beautiful mind. I recommend these poems as contemporary meditations, and I think the reader will find that they also contain genuine poetry.

Richard Church's *Twentieth Century Psalter* falls also into the growing contemporary category of meditative poetry. These poems are a sequence of day-to-day poetic meditations. They are a kind of diary, with something of the quality of the journalistic essay, reminiscent of Louis MacNiece's *Autumn Journal*. Richard Church lacks the intense concentration of Edwin Muir, but he has an attractive discursive sincerity, which makes his book extremely readable.

Twentieth Century Psalter is, in the most respectable sense, a kind of poetic journalism, which fulfils a function of day-to-day thoughtful observation and moralizing, which is lacking in our Press. Miss Ann Ridler's quiet and sometimes exquisite poems of domestic life and rural piety also have a journalistic quality. They seem improvised from day to day, written simply and well, like letters to a friend.

A poet to watch is Peter Yates, author of *The Motionless Dancer*. These poems,

strongly visual and musical, show a remarkable power of seeing abstract ideas in terms of flesh and blood:

Light dazzles on the turning globe;
Divides the ache of counted time,
Revealing through the carnal robe
The spirit's hunger in its flesh—
A swimmer drowning in warm blood:
A vivid ghost illumining dark.

I put Mr. Peter Yates together with Roy Fuller and W. R. Rodgers, as poets who may have a considerable future. All three are already skilful writers.

Word Over All, by Cecil Day Lewis, contains the best poems he has written, and also some less strong ones than the best in his other books. The Sonnet Sequence (printed in HORIZON) *O Dreams*, *O Destinations*, The Album, and the other love poems are a high-water mark in his work. In his poems on being in the Home Guard, he seems to show a rather facile response to the dramatic occasion. Day Lewis is a poet of great skill, with a keen eye, and with a true, if rather conventional, musical gift. He writes well when he is analysing a sequence of past experiences, as in the Sonnet Sequence, which concerns growth from childhood, and very well when he is deeply moved. At other times, there seems to be a lack of certainty about his emotional touch. He seems to lack an absolutely sure sense of the difference between deep feelings and histrionic occasions—I suppose that is a way of saying he lacks a sense of humour, at any rate about the Home Guard. But the best poems in this book are very good indeed, and at least half the poems here qualify as his best work.

Mr. Norman McCaig in *Far Cry* shows a powerful imagination, capable of producing good lines. He seems to write at top speed, involving the reader in a gale of generous images. He uses far too many words:

What fantastic animal is this that lies
weakly waving its limbs in an unexplained problem;
Do this or that, we hinge ourselves on a balance,
wax on our wings of reason, into the empyrean
attempt the sun itself in terror of ocean,
and fall like bats into our terror's mesh
drowned, in broad sun, the food of simple flesh.

Publishers of poetry all seem to specialize in their own line. Routledge's seem most partial to young poets who use an enormous number of words in which they say very little, although they (the young poets) obviously do have something to say, if only there were a blue pencil handy. Mr. Savage, Mr. Hendry, Mr. McCaig, they all suffer from an overload of words, even though their words hurtle through the air with great violence. An exception, perhaps, is Mr. George Woodcock—but he is not altogether an exception. Read this:

For those who, magnolia tall, confront us,
Stately and pale, gods of a golden earth,
And south's inheritors of suns and status
There is no place among the quiet shadows

Of grey men drenched in brine and crowned with dirt,
There is no kingdom in the drowning furrows,
Or under the brimming towers, ambiguous trees
Where the dead water and women find their peace.

Here Mr. Woodcock is trying to make a statement of the following simple form: For those who . . . (have certain attributes). . . . There is no place among the quiet shadows (which have certain attributes). Not feeling quite satisfied with 'quiet shadows', he then goes on to say 'There is no kingdom in the drowning furrows', and then he has a shot at the attributes of 'brimming towers'. This seems to me a somewhat complicated way of expressing the simple postulate which Mr. Woodcock evidently has in mind: the question for the reader, and the critic, is whether this complication justifies itself, by proving to be a clarification of the simple postulate.

However, when Mr. Woodcock writes simple straightforward descriptions of Hampstead, or a windy day in March, he can be effective.

Two volumes of selections should be mentioned. One is the *Selected Poems of Osbert Sitwell*, which contains selections from *England Reclaimed* and several other volumes. The poems are arranged in an order specially suited to this volume, by which they gain considerably. The poems from *Demos the Emperor*, together with the selections which have appeared in *Life and Letters* are the most savage satire that Osbert Sitwell has written.

The other noteworthy selection is *Forty Poems* by John Lehmann. These poems of the last ten years show a steady development, from Cambridge, through the political 'thirties, up to the present war. In his recent ballads, Mr. Lehmann seems to have recovered the lyric grace of his earliest poems, and added to it the strength and experience of the world. Although they do not fall within the scope of new poetry, I should also mention that the Hogarth Press has published an interesting selection of the poems of Hermann Melville, and of the Spender-Gili translations of Lorca.

Since I wrote the above, a small volume called *The Inward Animal*, by Terence Tiller, has appeared. This is the second volume of this poet's work, and like most second volumes, it does not quite fulfil the promise of the first volume, *Poems*. Mr. Tiller is evidently absorbing many influences at present, and as many of the poems are written from abroad, he is evidently writing in difficult circumstances. But some of the simple descriptive poems, such as *Bathers*, live up to the first volume.

A reviewer of the year's poetry is always in the embarrassment that the interest of poetry does not lie in the immediate impression it makes, but in its power to be of interest over a period of many years. To say that nine or ten of the books reviewed here are of lively interest is to court a certain snub by time. However, another way of looking at contemporary poetry is to regard it as a laboratory in which experiments are being made, from which the literature of tomorrow will emerge. The books I have chosen for praise are those which I regard as written in a spirit of genuine and perhaps significant experimentation. I have criticized other poems unfavourably because it seems to me that the methods of the authors are not to pursue true conclusions, but to produce the effect of a colourful mist. Here is the list of nine books, roughly in order of interest, which

I recommend serious students of modern poetry to read. I put the books by new authors first, assuming that they will be of greatest interest to the reader, who wants to know what is particular to 1943.

- (1) *Poems 1937-1942*, by David Gascoyne (Poetry London, 8s. 6d.)
- (2) *Stone and Flower*, by Kathleen Raine (Poetry London, 6s.)
- (3) *A Private Country*, by Lawrence Durrell (Faber, 6s.)
- (4) *The Middle of a War*, by Roy Fuller (Hogarth, 6s.)
- (5) *The Motionless Dancer*, by Peter Yates (Chatto and Windus, 6s.)
- (6) *Word Over All*, by C. Day Lewis (Cape, 3s. 6d.)
- (7) *The Narrow Place*, by Edwin Muir (Faber, 6s.)
- (8) *Under the Cliff*, by Geoffrey Grigson (Routledge, 5s.)
- (9) *The Inward Animal*, by Terence Tiller (Hogarth, 3s. 6d.)

Add to these the selected volumes of Lorca (Hogarth, 3s. 6d.), Osbert Sitwell (Duckworth, 7s. 6d.) and Lehmann (Hogarth, 3s. 6d.); and two volumes of poems from America: *A Witness Tree*, by the veteran Robert Frost (Cape, 5s.), and the effective and fresh poems by Dunstan Thompson (Simon and Schuster, 2 dollars). It looks as if the presence of Auden in America were providing young poets there with exactly the School that they require over here.

Intelligence, sensitivity, imagination, perception and an enormous quantity of good intentions, flow into the stream of contemporary poetry, even though they distract it with cross currents and cross purposes. In some ways the picture is a promising one, and yet one cannot help feeling that something is wrong. On looking closer, I suspect that what is wrong is the lack of a critical sense and of a defined purpose at an early enough stage in each poet's development. Most of the poets whom I have singled out for praise have found their way, by themselves, without the help of any critic, or of any other poet. The poets who are not so good have lost their way, and they belong to schools, not like students, but like porpoises, where they dive in and out of the rainbows and mists of each other's enthusiasm. They should ask themselves seriously what effect they intend to produce by using words, and if they belong to some school of 'apocalyptic' or 'personalists' or 'anarchists' or what not, they should ask themselves what connection these programmes have with arranging words into poems. Critics should discover what objects of experience the poet is trying to create in a poem, and ask whether he does so. In modern conditions the poets need each other's help, but they need above all the atmosphere of mutual sympathy and mutual criticism of a circle preoccupied with the problems of art, rather than with problems of advertising.

Other books mentioned: *A Time to Mourn*, by D. S. Savage (Routledge, 2s. 6d.); *Far Cry*, by Norman McCaig (Routledge, 2s. 6d.); *Selected Poems of Herman Melville* (Hogarth, 3s. 6d.); *The Centre Cannot Hold*, by George Woodcock (Routledge, 2s. 6d.); *More Poems from the Forces*, edited by Keidrych Rhys (Routledge, 8s. 6d.); *A Book of Russian Verse*, edited by Maurice Bowra (Macmillan, 8s. 6d.); *Poems from the Russian*, translated by Frances Cornford and E. Polianowsky Salaman (Faber, 3s. 6d.); *Twentieth Century Psalter*, by Richard Church (Dent, 5s.).

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